

## Spell of the Axe

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# **Spell of the Axe**

by Anonymous

## Summary

Human!AU, DenNor (unrelated prequel to Blackmarked). In order to meet the requirements of his job with the MI6 'Magic Club' Department, the sorcerer Lukas Bondevik concludes a Grim contract with a Danish warrior he foolishly thinks he can mess with. DenNor, SuFin and mentions of UsUk and LuxMold. Magic, dark themes, occasional crack and... well, you know. I don't own anything but my twisted mind.

# Prologue

## PROLOGUE

A/N – Hello my dear readers! As if I hadn't started a million things already and timely updated none of them, this plot bunny popped in my mind and it was quite impossible to get it out of my system other than writing it down. So here it is guys, I just thought the Blackmarked AU had further potential and it was worth exploring, even if (yes, yes I am more than aware!) it is not the most original thing ever.

As for the fic itself, the events described take place before those in Blackmarked. Also, needless to say to those of you who have read that one, I went kinda easy on Elizaveta and Gilbert and it was all about true love and happy endings and stuff, but Grim contracts don't always play out like that (most of the times they don't) so this time... eh, you'll see.

*Warnings: Language, mentions of alcohol consumption and generally unhealthy lifestyle*

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A pale, long-fingered hand shot out from under the creased duvet, gripped the ringing device and launched it in the general direction of the opposite wall, which the cheap plastic clock hit violently before dropping to the floor defeated, in pieces. But the harm had been done and Arthur sat up in bed, slowly and groggily, a confused scowl already on his face. He looked over to the nightstand, where his phone waited patiently, innocently and then to the baby blue pieces of something lying further away on the stained carpet.

Muttering some unintelligible profanities (he didn't remember setting up an alarm clock for the life of him!), the Englishman shoved the covers aside and swung his bare feet over the edge of the bed, encountering an empty bottle as he did. The air was stale and reeking of old cigarette smoke and Arthur reached out to fish his phone from between a full ashtray and an empty pack of gauze, resting his gaze on the motionless lump lying on the other side of the king-sized bed under the duvet.

"Lukas? Good God, how long have we been lying here?" he asked, kicking the bottle away to get his bare feet on the ground. He stood eventually, being sharply reminded of the injured knee as pain promptly shot in said knee and up his thigh, resulting in another curse. "Damn, we stink too," he also observed after a quick sniff at his t-shirt.

"....Wedns...y"

"What?"

Arthur hopped awkwardly all the way to the stash of old files piled at the foot of the wall and climbed onto it to open the small windows. Bloody basement! He knew for a fact that none of the other MI6 departments were forced to function in such shitholes, but 'Magic Crime' was obscure and so painfully understaffed and under-everything that he often wondered why they

were bothering at all. It wasn't much of a job either (but Arthur for one had been forced into it after being caught using his 'otherworldly' skills to misappropriate what could have only been called an *innocent* amount of cash), pay was really shit but instead it was dangerous and for safety reasons they had to live in the Department's awful headquarters. The offices of the Magic Crime Department comprised of several communicating rooms – among which four incredibly small 'guest rooms', a bathroom and a would-be kitchenette – all overstuffed with ancient, decrepit furniture, files, cardboard boxes and other junk. Being located in a basement, there were very few windows and aside from the pale, flickering bulbs hanging randomly from the cracked ceilings, it was dark and depressing as hell. A fucking prison.

"...it's Wednesday," his only colleague and subordinate grumbled, rolling around to lie on his back, eyes still closed.

"WHAT?! Oh, jolly good! I missed my reporting appointment," the Chief concluded. "It was two days ago, for fuck's sake!"

"What would be the point? They're not gonna give you any backup..."

Which was painfully true. Only the previous Thursday they'd discovered a pub selling a wide range of extremely creative magically-enhanced cocktails to underage kids and getting their hands on the owner had proven a hazardous and unfortunate affair. More precisely, a small army of animated clockwork bodyguards had gotten the best of Arthur and Lukas, so much so that they'd barely escaped with their lives. In fact, Arthur could very well justify that he'd spent the past few days nursing the Norwegian, who'd gotten a horrid gash on his back from shoulder to the last rib in the process, of course leaving out how he'd gotten seriously drunk and been passed out himself most of the time.

"Does it still hurt?"

Lukas turned again, forced himself to sit up and rolled his shoulder. "Ahhh... fuck. Yeah, still does." He dropped back down on the pillows with a groan, covering his eyes with his arm.

"Hold on, I'm gonna get more gauze and tincture and I'll change your bandage, okay? Here." The other blond fished out a last cigarette from the pack he'd just stepped on and lit it up with a flick of his fingers, then brought it to Lukas's lips.

"I can't believe how bloody bad this turned out," Arthur pointed, sliding off the bed and making the mattress bounce. "And I know the whole fixed budget crap, but we'll need to figure something out soon because you see, we can't handle it much longer, not without better skills, better weapons and preferably more men too!"

The Norwegian took a long drag and blew the smoke towards the blackened ceiling, shifting a bit to ease his discomfort. He heard his boss rummaging through the cabinets in the bathroom and the distinctive sound of stuff clattering and breaking, accompanied by a plethora of curses.

"You know, my cousin Tino is contracted," he said.

“Maybe we too should contract – A BLOODY MAID!” Arthur shouted angrily. “I can’t find a damn thing in here!”

A maid wouldn’t have been half bad, she could have made coffee in the morning among other things, Lukas thought, although he wouldn’t go as far as to consider butter cookies with it. As things were, the constant offer of black Darjeeling was hardly satisfactory.

“I’m serious,” he stated upon Arthur’s return. “He says that nobody dares raid his shop these days, at least not when the bodyguard – or whatever the hell that *thing* is – is there with him. Because it’s always with him and shit, just like his dog.”

“I think it’s a bad idea.”

The Englishman climbed on the mattress and dumped the supplies on the duvet before reaching over to help his colleague roll over on his front. Nimble fingers peeled off the tape and the gauze and proceeded to dab at the wound with an antiseptic soaked pad, making Lukas whimper and cringe in pain.

“Right now my whole life is a bad idea.”

***To be continued***

# Chapter 2

## CHAPTER 1

A/N – Hello everyone! First of all I'd like to thank all of you who have taken an interest in this new project of mine, I am so glad and it's much appreciated! Second, I know the prologue wasn't much, so here is the first actual chap where things start to happen (or, if you will, start to really go to hell ;)))) Enjoy!

*Warnings: So yeah, I don't know if I mentioned (I think I did though...), there's the occasional crack but it's mostly a dark fic with a gloomy atmosphere and no one is really a good guy this time.*

-but we love bad boys don't we-

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A sharp, biting breeze was coming from the river nearby, making Lukas shiver in his light autumn jacket, but he soon regretted it as he stepped into the dingy block of flats and made his way up the dark, narrow staircase. The air inside was plagued by a mixture of foul smells – garbage, burned food, boiled laundry and whatnot – someone was yelling up the stairs, a baby was crying and the pipes were noisy, but he supposed that the rent must have been really cheap and the place low profile enough to make Tino feel safe to call this rather awful place home.

At first he'd thought of visiting his cousin at the shop instead – it was much more convenient, especially since he'd left his little brother in Tino's care upon taking the job with the Magic Crime Department (Emil hated it and never lost an opportunity to remind him), but Tino's business of trafficking of magic objects was not something officially approved of and Lukas would not have the Fin under scrutiny in case someone were to run random check-ups on him.

Arthur Kirkland thought the whole idea of *contracting* – whatever the hell that entailed – was bad business and something best staying out of, but then again he'd come back from his latest reporting appointment in the mood of someone hit by a bus, with the disturbing info that they were facing a probable budget cut if no notable improvement in results was to make itself apparent soon. And the Norwegian, even if he was wary of the thing himself, had already gotten a nasty wound on the job and wasn't planning on repeating the experience.

He breathed deeply - still feeling slightly dizzy after the long walk - and rang the doorbell, praying to all Gods that Emil was out.

“Hey!” Tino greeted cheerfully, filling the doorframe with his oversized sweater. “Long time no see, Lukas! I was so glad when I got the message!”

“Well, I-...”

“You’re staying for dinner, right?” Clearly his cousin *hadn’t* really gotten the message, since he moved quickly and pulled the pale blond inside before he could dodge it, almost making him trip over the small white dog which had come to greet the guest as well. “Come on, Emil must have missed you!” Tino leaned in and whispered to him confidentially. “I don’t think he likes it too much here with us... Anyway, Lukas, meet my man Berwald,” the Fin said, pointing to the kitchen, where a tall blond was carefully watching a pot of whatever atrocity Tino was cooking this time. “I-I mean my Grim, heh!”

The man turned slightly, assessing the newcomer with icy blue eyes from behind silver-rimmed glasses as he muttered something unintelligible and possibly hostile.

“He’s Grim alright,” his cousin observed fleetingly, making his way into the small living and plopping tiredly on the couch where he proceeded to stare numbly at the T.V. Just his luck, Emil was already there and the teen made an express point of not sparing him as much as a glance.

Lukas sighed. “So... uh... how’s it going, bror?”

The other stared pointedly at the flickering screen, a scowl deepening on his face. “How much longer are you going to let me stay here with these two freaks, *bror*?” he hissed eventually, making sure Tino couldn’t hear him from the kitchen.

“Emil! They’re not freaks-“

“Yes, they are! Tino’s up to all sorts of weird shit and that *thing* over there isn’t even human! It’s like some evil ghost or something, that he, like, summoned from a stupid book or something! I mean seriously, what the fuck?!”

Lukas sighed again, leaning over to pet the white ball of fluff wagging its tail at his feet now. Better not mention it to Emil that he was considering doing the same thing.

“Why can’t we just rent a place of our own?”

“Emil, we can’t afford it yet and besides, you still need someone to take care of you. And Tino does that! I can’t, not with this job and you know I *have* to do this job, it’s either this or worse, yeah? I’d rather not end up in whatever prison they might have for magic crime offenders.”

The silver-haired teen slapped his palms on his knees brusquely, looking as if he was about to jump from his seat. “You know what, *bror*, I’m soooo fucking tired of this whole fucking Harry Potter bullshit you’ve got going on! Why does everything have to be about *magic*?” he spat. “Why can’t you have a normal job, why can’t we live in a normal house instead of a shithole and have NORMAL FOOD FOR DINNER?!” he yelled the last part to make sure his point was getting across to the intended recipient.

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The dinner was a dismal affair.

Emil remained stubbornly silent throughout it, oozing a vibe of disgust and disappointment, just like the Grim who was disturbingly observant of those present, with an expression which clearly spelled out his lack of trust in his contractor's relatives. Tino insisted that Lukas was thin and pale and he should have a second helping of the dubious boiled meat he'd already generously shoved into everyone's plates, then started talking lively about the new lifestyle and cooking blog he was planning to put up soon as a side business. Lukas tried to offer some of the appalling dish to the little white dog when his cousin wasn't looking but Kukkamuna walked away with a snort (probably dog food was *way* better than this!).

"Emil hates me," the Norwegian said a while later, when he and Tino were out on the miniscule kitchen balcony and he'd lit up a cigarette to get rid of the bad taste in his mouth.

"Nah... he's just a teen. It's that phase, you know?" Tino stated, leaning on his elbows onto the railing purposefully, as if some great view was before him and not an inner courtyard filled with trash containers. He didn't go on to add that life for a child born with no abilities in the midst of a magic family couldn't have been easy either and that Emil probably felt 'on the outside' somewhat, frustrated even, despite things being generally more bad than good for the rest of them because of the whole magic thing.

"I want to be a good older brother, but I keep disappointing him," Lukas pointed sadly. "We were really okay after I'd just graduated from uni and I had the job at the library. We *did* have a place all to ourselves, and we could afford stuff too. Before I got arrested, that is..."

"Back then you kids had money because you used to go out every night dressed up like a whore and used you charming gift to rob people," the Fin replied with a sigh. "But people need more than money to be happy, and can do without money if they have other things. Like a loving family. Emil needs you to spend more time with him, listen to his shit when he feels like talking, you know, big brother stuff."

As if his little brother ever felt like talking or was loving to anyone else but his pet puffin... "He said a *normal* family would be great," the pale blond said. "Speaking of, I really wish you hadn't told him about Ber-... the Grim. That shit really freaked him out."

"It's *Berwald*," Tino clarified. "And he's really okay... I mean I was lucky to pick him and not someone else."

Lukas cringed, finding his cousin's words rather ominous and was suddenly wary of opening up the subject he'd come to talk about in the first place. But then again his wound still stung every time he moved his right arm, a painful reminder that his job had almost killed him and would succeed eventually if he didn't get protection.

"So this really is bad business..." he mused out loud. "And I'd come to ask you to help me get a contract."

If Tino was surprised, nothing betrayed it aside from an imperceptible falter in his smile.

"First of all, I don't have that copy of the Book of Grims. I couldn't fucking afford it, it costs five hundred golden coins! Just found out which shop has it and ripped off a page when they weren't looking – for good measure I won't ever set foot in there again. Second, the contract



is for life, once contracted the Grim will be with you for the rest of your days. Their ‘life’ in this world is bound to yours, when you die they go back to Hell, I suppose that’s why they’re so keen on the whole protection thing in the first place. Third, some Grimms are really wicked and make the *payment* part of the deal really unpleasant and shit.”

“... the payment part?”

“Yeah. You must take off your protection charms and let them drink your blood from time to time, especially after they actually do something to save you. Granted, no Grim would go anywhere near killing you, but they can make it bad is what I heard.”

Lukas blinked. “So you keep a bloodsucking spirit from Hell under the same roof with my little brother?!”

“Oh God, no! A Grim can only find nourishment in their contractor’s blood. It’s all about *the bond*. And besides, there are a lot of good parts too. Like, nothing can kill a Grim, not even another Grim, basically their contractor is their only weakness. And, um... I mean Berwald is pretty hot.”

Oh. Berwald was pretty hot (and probably rendered other services aside from protection – said the blush spreading across the other’s cheeks). The Norwegian inwardly facepalmed and barely refrained from asking whether Tino planned to pop the fucking question or something to someone he’d actually summoned from Hell.

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The irony...

Above the shop Tino had indicated there hung a blackened wooden plaque and upon that it was spelled ‘KIRKLAND’ in peeling green letters, barely visible in the shade of the street lamp. Lukas knew that his boss had several brothers – who were probably in the same unsavory line of work as Arthur himself – even if the Englishman had only fleetingly mentioned their existence and had been careful not to give any unnecessary details as to the whereabouts of these mysterious siblings and as to what they were up to. Something for which Lukas didn’t blame him one bit – after all family was family, all trouble and discord aside.

It was past midnight now and he peered inside through one of the side windows, which were wooden-framed and very dirty at the corners, and spotted a man at the tall, wooden counter, where several ledgers lay open in obvious disarray, next to a flickering computer screen. The man was passed out (hopefully asleep and not otherwise!), the upper half of his body toppled over and his fiery red hair spilling over the white pages.

The Norwegian went to the door – where the ‘OPEN’ sign was still turned outwards – and pushed the knob carefully. The small bell above the door rang and its old rusty hinges creaked as if in pain, but the man did not stir. His slumbering state became evident when it turned out that he was snoring loudly, and not even when Lukas accidentally stepped onto an empty beer can which lay discarded on the floor did he wake.

Thinking that this was much too easy and something was wrong with this picture, the pale blond went up to the counter, right under the man's nose, and purposely dug through a box of trinkets, picking up a business card of a Mr. Allistor Kirkland written in fancy letters.

Nothing.

*Oh well...*

The Book of Grims lay in the exact spot it had been when Tino had ripped a page from it – in the back shelves behind the counter - although the owner must have subsequently realized it had been tampered with, for now it was displayed securely inside a locked glass box.

And (precisely because it had been tampered with...?) its price had now gone up to six hundred.

A small smile tugged at the corners of the blond's mouth as he slipped carefully behind the sleeping man's chair and took off his cross-shaped barrette with nimble fingers. Where charming was helpless, lock-picking did the job and one way or the other, Lukas had the key to everything.

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“Arthur?”

The green-eyed blond was still in front of his laptop, despite the late hour, typing something in concentration and a low grumble of acknowledgement was all he would bother with momentarily.

“You know that brother of yours? The one with the red hair, Allistor I think?” Lukas said tentatively.

“I don't think there was ever a way of *not* knowing him, mate,” the Englishman muttered, still not paying attention.

The other bit nervously on his bottom lip, clutching the messenger bag into which he'd carefully stuffed the book. The bag also belonged to Allistor, but compared to the book itself it could only have counted as an insignificant loss to its owner.

“Um... the thing is... I'm afraid that I robbed him,” Lukas stated eventually, holding up the bag. “I got the Book of Grims.”

Arthur looked up at last, bushy brows furrowing slightly as he leaned against the backrest of his chair, pondering for a moment. “Does he know that *you* robbed him?” he asked.

“No.”

“Well then, I suppose there's nothing to be afraid of. He should keep a better eye on his bloody things, that tosser.”

***To be continued***

A/N – Oh, and if you're wondering where Mathias is, you'll wonder no more in the next chap  
;) There, spoiler :P

# Chapter 3

## CHAPTER 2

A/N – Hello my dear readers! Well, I know it took a while – I keep getting ideas and this plot is constantly on my mind, but for some mysterious reason I can't put anything 'to paper' – but here I am with a new chap of this little tale of terror. And yeah, things will get pretty bad (all the more since the keyboard of my laptop got fucked and some letters are scrambled and I have to correct all the time, so I'll just take out my wrath on the characters... kidding) Have fun!

**Warnings:** angst, mentions of substance abuse, graphic violence and gore, major character death

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*The study – which accurately reflected the illogical whim of most magic wielders to reject the comforts and practicalities of modern life – was a small square room with wooden wainscots from floor to ceiling, complemented with a thick Persian rug and heavy velvet drapes covering the tall windows, all furnishings effectively muffling all the noise from the nightclub below.*

*A large, framed portrait hung over the seat behind the desk, showing the yellowed face of a brunette woman in a luxurious, white lace dress, next to a dusty pendulum clock.*

*The massive oak desk itself was for the most part laden with a mess of registers and whatnot, all looking like the owner was using them either in a great hurry or with quite the carelessness. In one corner of the desk there was an ashtray shaped like a human skull which looked disturbingly authentic, next to a miniature alembic resting in a finely decorated silver support.*

*As he'd suspected, the registers were mostly books with cocktail recipes, mentioning a variety of ingredients which all would have sounded unfamiliar to anyone but a potions master – maybe Arthur could have found a use for these? He'd pick one on his way out then. Lukas walked behind the desk and looked at the three drawers below the polished top, each equipped with a different lock, all clockwork devices. Maybe inside there could have been some indication as to where the mysterious club owner was hiding...*

*He pushed the chair away to get a better look at them and briefly met the gaze of the woman in the portrait. The dark, doll-like eyes seemed to look at him, empty and dead, but her reddish-brown lips of cracked paint were curled up in a wicked smirk which definitely hadn't been there before.*

*Lukas rolled his eyes – this sort of 'scary' portraits meant to keep intruders away were cheap and usually didn't come with any other additional feats past the eyes trick and the creepy smiling. He ignored it, squatting to study the drawers' locks instead. The blond plucked out*

*his barrette from behind his ear and carefully inserted the sharp tip into one of the holes, prodding to see if anything would click.*

*Nothing.*

*Tsking, the Norwegian tried applying a bit more pressure and-... There was finally something, a very faint noise at first, which grew steadily more intense, something like a music box slightly out of tune. But it wasn't coming from the mechanism. What the-... ?!*

*Lukas peered around the side of the desk and saw something standing in the frame of the open door; something which clearly hadn't been there before. It was a roughly shaped metallic object with arms and legs attached to a rectangular cylinder cage inside which countless cogwheels of all sizes glinted, in slow motion.*

*Several flashes of silver erupted all at one in the dim light when the thing fanned out its arms, at least three pairs of them and each armed with a different weapon – several knives, a meat-cleaver and a small hatchet – while a raspy laugh broke out from its metals innards.*

With a loud gasp, Lukas sat upright in bed and reached out to switch on the bedside lamp. Still panting and wide-eyed from the dream's terrors, he threw a rapid glance around the room, half-expecting to see the killer automaton with its blades at the ready. But that was impossible, right?! In the end neither he nor Arthur had taken anything from the club owner, so there was no way he could have tracked them back here, was it?!

Tugging at the damp t-shirt he was now shivering in, the blond swung his legs over the edge of the bed, trying to convince himself that the automatons couldn't break through the magic guards they'd set around the premises, even if in actual combat they'd proven surprisingly resilient to most spells cast against them. Cautiously, he made his way to the door and winced as he was met with the profuse darkness of the hallway.

He listened intently for a while, almost imagining that he could hear that sinister tune playing somewhere nearby, before eventually darting out in the direction of the small kitchenette. Barefoot, he padded quickly down the small hallway and pressed frantically on the light switch, breathing in relief as the pale bulb flickered to life and resisting the urge to peer over his shoulder.

The book was still lying there, on the tabletop where the Englishman had hesitantly examined it the evening before. After going through all the 'instructions' and 'stipulations', Arthur was still uncertain whether summoning a Grim and sealing a contract counted as a solution or just as stirring more shit. And too bad he couldn't decide because the matter of the automatons' master remained unresolved, he was still out there selling addictive and deadly potions to unsuspecting youths and now a corpse had turned up too. They'd have to go after him again, although Lukas wasn't sure if he wouldn't come after *them* instead (seeing how wizards usually had a particularly bad reaction to people with enough nerve to try and go through their things). On that note, he hoped that Arthur's brother would never find out where his precious copy of the Book of Grims had gone....

In the back of one of the cupboards, hidden behind countless boxes of black tea, there was a bag of coffee and Lukas pulled it out, switching on the coffee machine. Next came a small jar

of white fairy dust which shouldn't have been there, and he poured a bit directly onto the tabletop before emptying the rest of it into his mug. A few sniffs of it, combined with the familiar buzz and the ensuing aroma helped calm his nerves a bit, such that when he reached out for the book his hands had almost stopped shaking.

The book was thick and heavy, with yellowing pages and covered in dry, cracked brown leather which looked almost scaly. At a first glance it was no different than any other old tome and it surely hadn't seemed to pose any danger when Arthur had handled it, such that when the upper cover suddenly grew far more visible and sharper scales, pricking the Norwegian's fingers, his surprise was absolute and all the nastier when he saw the few drops of blood drawn from his fingertips being absorbed greedily by the book.

"What the fuck?!" Sucking spitefully on his wounded fingers, Lukas grabbed a frying flipper from the rack with his good hand and hit the book in full a couple of times, for good measure. "What, you're hungry now?! You fucking thing!"

After filling the mug with freshly-brewed coffee, he used the flipper to turn the cover and the few first introductory pages.

What was somewhat problematic with the 'catalogue' part of it (*somewhat*, because as Tino had explained, in the end it was pretty much a lottery and you got what you got) was that it had no pictures. Each page contained a brief description of a warrior (Grim), mentioning their name, place and time of death and emphasizing their skills in battle and number of kills during their lifetime. But what was even more problematic – actually the nasty catch of the thing - was that in the introduction pages it was written that the Grims were people chosen by the 'sorceress mother' either for their outstanding fighting abilities or for the extreme rottenness of their souls and of course the descriptions provided omitted to say who was which.

And it went without saying that, even if the rules of the Grim contract applied to all of them, there would have been a difference between summoning a hero or a villain. Apparently the Finn had been lucky with his choice, but Lukas was quite doubtful, especially after the book had 'bitten' him. Still, the memory of that blade on his skin was still fresh and he had no desire to face the automatons' master and his infernal lot again armed with his skills and weapons alone. At least a Grim was supposed to be foolproof and could not kill him and also in case of an extreme situation there was the little safety device Tino had crafted – a ring which, once slipped on, would make the Norwegian invisible to any Grim 'alive', not only his own.

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The fenced yard in the back of the museum building was normally completely dark, but now the full moon shone an eerie, silvery light onto all the debris and numerous trashcans deposited there, as well as over the wide space of concrete dotted with random tufts of grass which had grown through the cracks.

Lukas didn't feel like getting too far away from the basement exit – not knowing what could have been lurking in the shadows – and instead picked a place relatively close to the wall.

There was enough room there to draw the required pentagram and, as the blond was setting a few twigs in the middle, it crossed his mind that this would probably be the stupidest thing he'd ever done so far.

He'd ended up ripping a page more or less at random, picking a Nordic warrior – there were a lot of those it seemed and 'better the devil you know', or so he thought. Still, doubt began to creep back in as he whispered the incantation and a small flame burst over the wood, illuminating the chalk lines. The fire began to grow, nuances of orange and yellow gradually darkening into a greenish glow.

Okay. Okay, there went nothing.

"I SUMMON YOU... MATHIAS KOHLER!"

Lukas threw the ripped page into the flames, half-expecting no effect whatsoever. What if Tino had stolen the real Book of Grims and replaced it with a prank?! His cousin wouldn't have put it past him and the Finn had done shit like that before. Maybe the ring was a prank too!

But something happened and the Norwegian suddenly felt something like a punch in the stomach, so hard that he dropped to the ground and the last thing he felt was his forehead colliding with the concrete.

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It smelled like smoke and something foul, like meat gone bad. Lukas stirred and opened his eyes, being met with the sight of a crackling fire over which a black, round pot was boiling. His fingers felt bare ground and he realized he'd been lying face down in the dirt, on the floor of a hut of sorts. Rough cloths and animal skins covered the walls and from a thin wooden rafter there hung several bunches of dried herbs and a large black bird. Its head was missing and fresh blood was dripping down, into the boiling pot.

An old woman dressed in a sack-like dress and adorned with a multitude of strange beads sat in the front of the fire, muttering something as she stirred in the pot. She neither paid any attention to the blond as he scrambled to his feet eventually and inquired, in a rather rude fashion, who she was and what (the fuck) was this place, nor did she try to restrain him as he moved around, in search of a way out.

The hut had no door.

"What the hell do you want from me, you fucking hag?!" Lukas shouted, desperate by now and having a mind to kick the pot just to spite the old witch, if nothing else. Unfortunately, he had a feeling that his rather limited knowledge in spells would have been rather ineffective against her.

But just then a door *did* open and a tall, massive man ducked inside, carrying a body slung over his shoulder. He dropped the body on the ground in front of the fire and Lukas saw that it was a young man, quite solid-looking himself and clad in heavy winter clothes hemmed

with fur, torn and bloody in places, and there was more blood on his face and in his golden-blond, wild hair. His eyes were closed, yet his chest was still rising and falling, almost inconspicuously.

“This one really was hard work, mother,” the man spoke, pulling a bloody sword from his belt and tossing it aside as he sat down next to the woman.

“I told you it would be worth coming this far, Ivan,” the hag croaked, standing and wiping her hands on her skirt. “You can get some rest for now. It will be some time until the next hunt,” she added, shuffling and kneeling next to the man lying on the ground. She pulled out a small knife from the folds of her garment and used it to cut his clothes in the front, baring his chest.

Lukas squeezed his eyes shut the moment he saw the blade descend onto the man’s skin and crouched down clutching his stomach at the sounds of flesh being ripped through. A wave of nausea washed over him and terror filled his every pore as the blond curled up on the ground, after crawling as far as he could from the witch and her victim.

“Yes, you will make a faithful servant, Mathias Kohler!”

The Norwegian’s eyes snapped open at the sound of the hag’s voice and he saw her clutching something red and still twitching in her claw-like hand – the man’s heart.

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“Are ya alright there, princess?”

Suddenly he was back in the concrete yard, under the moonlight, and there was no trace of the witch and her accursed hut anymore. Instead, the wild-haired young man from earlier was leaning over him with a curious expression, as if he had no idea what had just occurred. Lukas stared at him perplexed – even his clothes were the same as in his... vision, in one piece this time, just like the man himself seemed to be, his hair still a bird’s nest, but he was now grinning and his light-colored eyes shone with mirth. On a less positive note, his smile showed rather sharp teeth and he was resting one forearm lazily on the long handle of a remarkably large and wicked-looking battle axe.

“Oh, shit!” the Norwegian breathed out, scrambling to his feet and mindlessly wiping his nose and wet cheeks with his jacket sleeve.

“’s fine,” the Grim said, taking a step forward. “Ya screamed and cried a bit an’ ya passed out, but others have done worse, I’ll say.”

“...o-others?”

The taller blond tilted his head and shrugged. “My other contractors,” he clarified. “’cause yer my contractor, yes? Let me see yer mark.”



Before Lukas could say anything in return, Kohler gripped his left arm and pushed up his sleeve, revealing a black tattoo in the shape of his own battle axe now adorning the pale skin of the other's forearm.

"What the-?!"

"Aww, come on, princess, I know it doesn't hurt. 's just my mark on ya and it looks quite good too, ya know, wicked," the Grim said and winked, grinning some more.

"You *marked* me?!" the smaller blond asked, horrified. "And I'm not a fucking *princess*!"

Kohler laughed. "Clearly, ya just wiped yer snot with yer sleeve, no princess does that. An' I had to point that out before ya called me a barbarian or the like, ya sorcerers tend to do it all the time."

Lukas scowled, his fear now replaced by growing irritation. Of course, he'd just *had* to summon the most annoying Grim of all! He threw a quick glance at the enormous battle axe and had a fleeting urge to ask whether it was compensating for something, but refrained.

"You're just going to make a big fuss over the fact that you're a mighty Viking, am I right?" he said instead, as dryly as possible. "Well, I'm a Viking too by blood, so you might as well save your breath."

The Dane (as per the book description) bit his upper lip comically, eyes lingering on his contractor's skinny jeans, tight-cut jacket and overall delicate build and nodded slowly before reaching out and pinching his cheek with two fingers.

"Yer cute... an' funny, *master* Lukas," he said with a broad grin and blatant irony. "So let me tell ya how it's gonna be, 'kay? Ya do whatever and if ya fuck it up an' get into trouble, I'll pop up and fix it. Ya know, save ya and stuff, make sure ya don't kick the bucket before time. But in the meantime I'm my own man and since I haven't been in this world for a while now, gotta do some catching up. So see ya, little one!"

With that, Mathias Kohler walked away without a care in the world, his anachronistic Viking clothing morphing into an elegant black peacoat and dress pants.

***To be continued***

# Chapter 4

## CHAPTER 3

A/N – Hello everyone! So, I'm finally back after a bit of a hiatus (because seriously, this summer was hella weird but surprisingly I had a few unexpected personal achievements along the way), ready to get it on with this plot I really, really love and have high hopes for! That being said, enjoy today's update;)

**Warnings:** *angst, language, mentions of substance and alcohol abuse, some disturbing stuff (because this is a horror, you have been warned!)*

*Allistor - Scotland*

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“Someone’s surely slept in late today... have you been out partying or something?”

Lukas plopped tiredly on the shabby sofa in the living room, fingers wrapped tightly around the coffee mug he’d brewed pretty much on autopilot (nevertheless he had a strong and painful suspicion that it was the last of his supply). The summoning spell from the night before had turned out to be particularly draining, and... what the fuck?! Kohler or whatever the fuck the Viking’s name was had just waltzed off with no guarantee of ever showing up again, leaving him with a serious headache and that awful tattoo – in broad daylight its absolute, profuse black just looked a lot more sinister on the Norwegian’s pale skin. He mumbled something unintelligible, pulling his left shirt sleeve lower on impulse.

“I found this in the kitchen this morning,” Arthur said seriously, shoving the empty jar of fairy dust under his subordinate’s nose. “Lukas, I thought we didn’t do that...” he added with a hint of scolding, lifting the other’s chin and leaning in to examine his eyes.

Fairy dust tended to dilate one’s pupils just like regular drugs and even alter their color on occasion, but after a few hours of sleep the effect had eventually worn off and sadly any feeling of comfort it provided, too.

“I-I’ve been having nightmares...” the pale blond stuttered. “A-About the automaton. I keep dreaming that it’s-... that they’re coming to hack me to pieces! I can’t... I’m just-...”

The Englishman sighed, pulling away. “There are potions for that, you know? You should have told me.”

*No, no potions, anything but that!* Lukas thought but said nothing, because then his boss would have asked why and the last thing he wanted to delve into right now was the reason he and Emil had left their grandmother’s house back in Norway and had gone as far as to move to another country!

It was better if Arthur never found out that their grandmother was a necromancer and that she'd used potions on Lukas to-... Because that was the scariest part, he had no idea, not the faintest memory of what she'd actually made him do during those times, but it was bad nevertheless.

Ever since their parents had passed, when he'd been only eight years old and Emil a baby, Lukas had instinctively fought to keep their small family from falling apart, but their only remaining *Bestemor* (A/N – grandmother), the one who had taken the boys in after the accident, hadn't exactly made it easy. She lived in the outskirts of a small town, at the edge of a large forest, her picturesque cottage looking like it belonged in a fairytale. And a fairytale she too belonged in, as well as everything that surrounded them in their new home, except *Bestemor* wasn't exactly the fairy godmother, but rather the evil witch the townspeople dreaded and generally avoided...

At first, the children had bullied Lukas at the new school because he was her kin and he'd thought they were all stupid and cruel for no reason. But after coming home in tears one day, *Bestemor* had simply told him that everyone ends up in the same kind of grave and had shown him the first corpse she was working on.

It had been the first time he'd passed out.

When he'd gone back to school three days later, two of the boys in his class had gone missing never to be found and from that moment on nobody had dared pick on him ever again.

But this had only been the beginning of far more sinister things to happen. When Lukas had turned fourteen his incredible charming gift had begun manifesting, yet far from being a blessing it had made all hell break loose. *Bestemor* was very pleased with her grandson's magic abilities and had begun making use of them in subtle and sinister ways Lukas was more often than not too confused, tired or dizzy to even be aware of. And then, by the time the older sibling had turned eighteen, Emil had started having horrible nightmares every night and he'd realized it was finally time to make their escape.

Luckily for them, his cousin Tino's parents - who were living in London and apparently thriving in the local magic underworld - had agreed to take the boys in and give them the chance to a relatively 'normal' life (not that life in a magic family could ever be anything like, truth be told...). And even more luckily, *Bestemoor* had decided not to come after them.

"Anyway, speaking of the chap with the club, I have some-... Hold on."

Arthur pulled his phone out from his pocket and instantly made a grimace at the lit screen. "What do you know, it's dear Allistor. Must have discovered that the fucking book's gone..."

The Norwegian sunk instinctively into the backrest as his colleague answered the call, slightly worried.

"Oh? What do you mean, you've been robbed?" Arthur feigned innocence, eyebrows raised suggestively. At the other end of the line someone was shouting now, so he scowled and pressed the speaker button, holding the phone away from his ear.

“What the hell are you saying?!”

*“Ah’ve been robbed by fockin’ Vikings, that’s wha’ ah’m bloody tellin’ ye!”*

The younger sibling blinked in irritation. “What the hell do you mean, ‘you’ve been robbed by Vikings’?! The last Viking invasion was almost a thousand years ago, what fucking century do you bloody live in, Allistor?! And why can’t you put some surveillance cameras like normal people do in this day and age?!”

*“Ah’m tellin’ ye, the person breakin’ into mah shop was someone of Viking blood! Ah have mah own magical devices fer protection an’ that’s wha’ they’re tellin’ me!”*

“Very useful indeed, I’d say,” Arthur observed dryly.

*“Now Artie, ah’m waitin’, so don’t be keepin’ me waitin’ here ta much or it will be bad...”*

“What are you waiting for?”

*“Ah’m waitin’ fer an honest confession, laddie! Ah know it was ye, ye wee bastard! Ye think ah don’t know?! Ye’ve taken mah book! Ye’ve taken mah book an’ it’s worth a thousand golden coins, too!”*

At that, Lukas quickly shook his head frowning and held up six fingers.

“Look, Al, I have no idea what book you’re talking about, but surely no bloody book could possibly be that expensive-”

*“Ah’m talking about the bloody Book of Grims, ye bastard! An’ ah know ye have it, because that lil assistant o’ yers, the cute one who looks like a fine lass, he’s Norwegian, ain’t he?! Ye thought ah wouldn’t figure it out, aye?!”*

The Englishman gave no reply this time, only scrunched up his face, pinching the bridge of his nose with an air of exasperation.

*“Now here’s the deal, lads: ah don’t want the book back, because it wasn’t sellin’ anyway, tha’ damn shit, but ah want mah money an’ ye’ll pay me too if ye don’t want hella trouble, ye hear? Ye’ll get me mah thousand golden coins!”*

“The price was *six hundred*! Six hundred – it still has the price tag on!” Lukas intervened.

*“Well wha’ do ye know, the price goes up fer thieves!”* the Scot stated with a chuckle and the line went dead.

The pale blond sighed, sipping some more coffee as he felt his headache amplifying. He must have been really careless that night – and here was the result! – and for what? Damn it!

“Look, I’ll pay him, okay? Don’t worry-”

“The problem is, I believe, that after we got arrested and stuff we seem to have lost our touch as gentlemen thieves, if you ask me,” Arthur concluded with a sigh, standing up. “And it’s

one bloody big problem too, because we seem to be getting into more and more debt too now, on top of everything else!”

“Why do you say ‘more and more’...?”

The other blond sighed again, rubbing the back of his neck. “Well... bottom line we have to stop the owner of the automatons, no matter what. So, we must find him first and foremost.” Arthur paused and stuffed his hands in his pockets, looking uncomfortable. “While you were asleep I called our ‘friend’ the prince... and he actually had some stuff for me, something we can work with-”

“Wait, Arthur, you called *the vampire*? The one who laughed in our nose and said-”

“Yes, I know, and I’m bloody well aware that we’ll have to pay him too, that’s why I said... But he’s one of the top informants when it comes to the underworld, what the hell was I supposed to do?! If anyone could help with this... and I was right too, because he did tell me, Lukas. He told me where we can find the master of the automatons.”

The Norwegian pulled his knees up to his chest and ran a hand through his hair, tousling his long blonde bangs further, reaching for the pack of cigarettes lying on the coffee table as his boss went on to share what he’d found out. Apparently, the killer automatons had recently become all the rage at an underground fighting arena everyone in the magic community – if it could be called that – went for ‘quality entertainment’ these days, and the vampire prince was sure that the person using them for the fights and their maker had to be one and the same, since countless offers had been given for his creations yet they had all been firmly refused. Their maker would simply not share the spoils of his clockwork army with anyone else and some spoils there were, since the automatons had not yet lost a single match!

“I’m afraid we’ll have to go down there,” Arthur concluded with blatant lack of enthusiasm. “And since we’ve fucked up anyway with Allistor and he doesn’t want the bloody book back, we might as well contract a Grim, because I don’t think going down there on our own is a good idea. So, I’ll do it. Fuck, one should suffice, I think...”

Lukas chewed on his bottom lip and said nothing.

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“This is *unreal*...” the green-eyed blond observed, taking a deliberately slow sip of his whiskey glass and sighing deeply.

“What the fuck did you do?!” Lukas asked, anticipating the very likely negative outcome. “Did you burn the wrong page or something?!”

Because Arthur had apparently made a very wrong choice, summoning an American soldier from the Revolutionary War, no less, and taking into account that his boss was British, only William Wallace could have been worse than that! In contrast, Mathias Kohler looked like a much more inspired and harmless option (albeit a probably useless one, too).

The basement headquarters had an empty room with solid stone floor and ideal isolation which they'd kept for potential magic experimentation (although they'd hoped it wouldn't be necessary any time soon...) and now the candles scattered into random niches in the cracked walls were casting their uncertain flicker onto the smudged remnants of the pentagram Arthur had drawn on the floor in simple white chalk, as well as on the figure standing in the middle of it.

A young man, tall and somewhat stout yet looking barely out of his teens stood at the crossing of the lines, his hands crossed awkwardly over his chest as he was taking in his surroundings with large, baby-blue eyes from behind gold-rimmed spectacles. His dark-blue military jacket with red lapels and collar was rather tattered and the two white ribbons on the front of it were stained with mud, as were his tight, knee-length breeches.

"Where am I?" he inquired eventually, genuinely puzzled and his voice cracking slightly as if from fatigue.

Arthur took another gulp of his drink, while his assistant mentally noted that this certainly was different – unlike Kohler who at least had seemed to know what the hell was going on, this... *kid* looked like he'd just dropped from the moon and had landed straight on his head. Well, actually not from the moon but the American Revolutionary War, which was in fact significantly worse.

"Is this your first contract, Alfred *F.* Jones?" he asked.

The youth turned away from his momentary examination of the sinister space and smoothed his corn-blond hair with a hurried hand, clearing his throat. "Uh... no. No, of course, I've... I've had other contracts before, sir. But each one is different, you know? I always ended up in a different place and time and..." He paused, eyeing the other with a sudden suspicion. "You..." he added, pointing his finger. "You're not... *British*, are you?!"

"As a matter of fact I *am* British and you're in London right now. It's also the twenty-first century, so you might as well get the fuck over it."

Alfred's eyes were wide as saucers. "What?! Why would I—"

"Because you've bloody won the war, that's why," Arthur stated neutrally.

"Like hell I'm going to serve you! Like hell I'm going to work for a fucking *red coat*, do you hear?!" the American shouted, walking up to his new contractor and gripping his chin roughly. "I won't lower myself to..."

But his sentence was cut short when the other suddenly slumped against his body, whiskey glass dropping from his limp hand and shattering onto the floor with a startling noise.

"Good God, just how much did he drink?!"

"He's not that drunk, but the summoning spell is draining," Lukas said. "He's just exhausted."

The bespectacled blond snorted and gave him an incredulous stare. “If you’re a weak sorcerer, yeah,” he agreed, scooping the currently unconscious Arthur up and throwing him unceremoniously over his shoulder. “So, what kind of business are you guys in?”

“You... want to know?” the Norwegian asked cautiously, leading the way to his boss’s small bedroom.

“Sure I do! Hey, who are *you* contracted to?”

Lukas bit his lip, turning around quickly to open the door and let the other in. “Who said I was contracted? As you must’ve figured out by now, there’s no one else here with us.”

Alfred dropped the Englishman onto the mattress more or less carefully and then shuffled abruptly, gripping the smaller blond’s left hand and pushing his sleeve up. His eyes widened briefly upon seeing the black battle axe adorning the other’s forearm from the wrist to the joint, but then he snorted again.

“Well, well, no wonder there’s no one else around here – Kohler’s a notorious lazy ass! You’d need to be in serious trouble for him to bother showing up and shit.”

*Great news.*

“Just... please don’t tell him about my contract,” the Norwegian mumbled, uneasy, pointing at his sleeping boss. It wasn’t that he was afraid of Arthur or anything, it was simply... *He wouldn’t have fucking contracted you if he’d known...* “As for the business we’re in, well, it’s not a business, it’s a governmental job actually.”

He went on to describe the situation in detail, emphasizing the few accomplishments and leaving out the multitude of fuck-ups in between, yet the American’s face betrayed increasing disappointment and even dismay at what he was hearing (he probably wasn’t as naïve as he looked...).

“So all in all you’re pretty fucked,” Alfred concluded.

“Yeah. We are. But... you’ll help, right?”

The bespectacled blond threw a short, exasperated glance towards the bed Arthur was passed out on and crossed his arms defensively. “Not like I have much of a choice now, do I?!”

### ***To be continued***

A/N – I may or may not have said this before but I absolutely love hearing from you guys, so maybe let me know your thoughts on this ;) I am planning to possibly include more of Lukas and Emil’s childhood tale of horror later on, what do you think? Also, some SuFin coming up next ;) Beijos!

# Chapter 5

## CHAPTER 4

A/N – Hello, my dears! It's me again (and I just sounded like fucking Excalibur... great) with a new delayed chapter of this fic I keep saying I love but do nothing for, damn it. Anyway, if you've known me for a while by now my epic lazy-ass-ness is already old news to you and as such you have my deepest gratitude for sticking around! That being said, enough of this shit and enjoy today's update!

**Warnings:** mentions of graphic violence, mentions of alcohol and substance abuse

*Luca Majerus – Luxembourg*

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For an underground location the Doom Dome was quite impressive, almost like the average-sized Roman arena, and the magic-enhanced lighting system was throwing a surprisingly bright glow over the high walls of brick and concrete rising above its bottom, holding the massive iron gates, the first level which was destined for the common audience and further up, to the private loges which gave the best view of the show. Below, there was a complicated network of dungeons leading up to the gates of the arena, where it was pitch dark and a small army of lycan guards belonging to the owners roamed, taking care of the props and weaponry, maneuvering the special effects and handling the warrior slaves and those 'temporarily hired'.

Still, it was far from refined, in fact it was one of the foulest places of entertainment as far as the underworld was concerned, even if the gore, no-rules fights and the pervasive scent of blood attracted a large crowd every night. The scent of blood and death was impregnated in the very walls, mixed in the smoke of the countless magical torches, freshened up again and again by the random drifts of air and finally, the voice of blood and death was in the mad roars of the audience which often covered the music blaring from the sound system.

And then there was the *show*.

Fighters and magical beasts and inventions of all sorts were facing each other every night, weapons of all sorts slashed, hacked, torn, new blood constantly adding to the murky layer of shallow water on the floor of the arena, while countless spectators watched, enthralled and mortified in the same time, their senses assaulted, unable to tear their gaze off the gore display of sheer violence.

"Well, still the same shit pit as I remembered, but I suppose it's a profitable business..." Mathias observed, leaning on his forearms over the ornate railing of Kiku Honda's loge and scanning the swarming place. "So how does it work these days? Still a good no rules, fight to the death kind of thing?"



“No rules and it’s a complete gamble – you get whatever comes out of the opposite gate, that is to say whatever the owners pick to make it more exciting for the crowd and for the bets placed on the respective fighter. But Grims are still banned, my friend. Only contractors can fight, because there’s always a chance that their Grims might screw up,” the petite Japanese man replied, further concentrating into the lavish folds of his silk kimono and bringing a black orchid to his nose discreetly. “So I’m afraid you won’t be making any money around here on your own.”

The Dane waved his hand. “Well, no need just yet, I had some collections left to make from the last time I was on the job. For now I’ll just focus on the contract I’m currently working on.”

“You could have fooled me,” Kiku chuckled. “But please, do tell me of this new contractor of yours. And if you’re in money now, are you considering getting insurance with the house of Majerus? I’ve heard that the young Majerus who took over the business recently – I believe his name is Luca – is quite reliable.”

Mathias had heard about this practice before, because even if in theory the Grim contracts were infallible and no contractor could escape their clutches once marked, some sorcerers still managed to pull some unfortunate stunts to elude their contractual obligations, albeit forfeiting the benefits of protection. And this was where the Majerus family came in – being powerful and knowledgeable enough to get their hands on the rogue ones and deliver them back to their Grims, but they required a particularly expensive insurance fee be paid per contract and he had zero intentions to fill the pockets of the stiff-assed Luxembourgers.

“Besides, I’ve never had any problems,” he said. “As for my contractor, he’s-...”

Mathias paused brusquely, squinting as he glanced on the opposite side of the arena and spotting said contractor in the common area. By the look of it, Lukas Bondevik was currently in the company of a bushy-browed young man – another low level sorcerer judging by the lack of stylish clothing – and... was that Alfred Jones, a.k.a. the most ill-reputed Grim of all?

“Thor’s cock...” the Dane grumbled under his breath, anticipating trouble, as he straightened his back and hastily smoothed out the lapels of his black dress suit. “Well, what do you know, Kiku, speak of the devil... As it turns out my new ‘master’ is here tonight. So I guess I’d better be on my way if I want to make sure the little grinch who thinks himself a Viking doesn’t get into some shit...”

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Shoulders stiff and hands clenched onto the dirty iron railing, Arthur purposely ignored the bizarre crowd around them as he stared down at the sinister reflection of lights in the filthy water on the floor of the arena below. It had a distinctive reddish hue from all the spilled blood and it was littered with random unidentifiable debris the maintenance staff wasn’t bothering with, merely gathering up the corpses and the scattered pieces of weaponry after each fight.

“Ewww, man that’s gross,” Alfred pointed, scrunching his nose. “What the fuck are we looking for in this shithole again?”

“We’re looking for the bloody automatons,” the Englishman muttered ill-humoredly. “And what the hell is up with you?! Yesterday you were all 18<sup>th</sup> century ‘yes sir, no sir’ and now you sound like ‘a boy from the hood’!”

“Yesterday I had just arrived here, but Grims have the power of adapting very quickly to the times and circumstances of a new contract!”

“So now you talk like that because we’re a bunch of bums here,” Arthur concluded dryly, to which the American instantly pointed that both the head of the Magic Crime department and his lovely assistant *did* constantly drop the ‘f bomb’ at every two words.

Meanwhile, Lukas was feeling dizzy and almost nauseous from all the noise, people and sights, also having secretly snorted some more fairy dust prior to this endeavor (since he was convinced that he could not again lay eyes on the sinister automatons without passing out on the spot if entirely sober).

“Well, the best fights are supposed to start right after ten o’clock, which would be very soon,” he said. “Isn’t that what the prince told you? We have to stay and watch, I mean if the automatons appear-....”

“Ugh... there are no seats here!” Alfred complained. “If only we could have rented a loge... Why the fuck are you so poor, stupid red coat?!” he whined, before getting distracted by a group of giggling nymphs clad in almost see-through evening gowns.

“Useless brat!” the green-eyed blond sighed. “I need something to drink. Now.”

And a drink would come in handy, as they were about to discover. The three had arrived during the interval between the afternoon ‘small stuff’ and the evening’s ‘glam matches’ – as the plaques at the entrance advertised – just in time to see the maintenance staff clean up the aftermath of the previous show. And *that* alone had been bad enough. Lukas for one had no desire to watch the automatons hack someone to pieces after he’d felt one of their blades on his own flesh, so he spent the last golden coin to grace his pockets on three large cups of extremely dubious wine which he generously shared with his companions.

The wine was very strong and tasted foul – of medicinal herbs mixed with something disgusting – and the instant dizziness it brought to both the Norwegian and his boss (Alfred was unaffected by it, being dead and all) turned out to be unfortunate as the speakers announced the beginning of the first match and the relaxed crowd of spectators just lingering about suddenly rushed forward chaotically towards the railings from all sides, shouting and struggling to get a better view of the arena, while up in the private loges the privileged underworlders lounged on soft sofas and were served fine foods and beverages. Lukas slumped in defeat against Arthur’s shoulder, while the latter stepped on someone’s foot and was sharply elbowed in the stomach by a frantic bet broker.

The American was right – it sucked being poor.

“Man, that’s tough! Did you hear that?! A fighter never knows what he’s up against, they just walk out there and it’s whatever comes out through the gates on the other side! And *no. Fucking. Rules!*” Alfred exclaimed, yelling to make himself heard over the growing heavy metal blare of the sound system. “Dude, I’m scared...”

“Why the fuck are *you* scared?” his contractor yelled back, scowling. “Fuck, I never liked bloody mosh pits...”

Suddenly, Lukas really didn’t want to see this, any of it.

Cold shudders started running down his spine the moment one of the iron gates began to creak open, the noise of the heavy chains loud enough to be audible even over the music. Then a bulky-looking man in shiny metal gear and armed with a long sword and gleaming bronze shield stepped out under the glaring lights, now burning a lot more brighter than during the interval, the reddish murk sloshing disgustingly at every step he took.

The audience fretted and cheered madly, calling a name he couldn’t quite make out while the fighter growled savagely and waved his weapon, and when the other gate finally lifted and something yet unidentifiable but large enough to fill the stone frame nearly up to the ceiling came into view, the blond covered his eyes with his hands. What followed was a mess of shouting, growls and roars, clashing of metal on the background of deafening, bad quality music, but the match didn’t last long – or at least Lukas had this impression, not having really paid attention. At any rate, he chose quite the unfortunate moment to sneak a peek between his fingers, just in time to see the bulky fighter’s helmet-covered head severed neatly and dropping into the water with a sickening splash, followed immediately after by the headless body.

“OH, FUCK!” the American Grim exclaimed in shock as his contractor doubled over, hand pressed over his mouth and the crowd unleashed a hell of cheers, yelling, cursing and whatnot.

“Look, we’re wasting our time like this,” the Norwegian said, looking anywhere but at the ‘stage’ below. “I think we should split up and just look for the automatons. We draw too much attention as a group and I think I might get lucky down there in the dungeons,” he suggested, pointing towards the stairs leading further down into the bowels of the Arena. Technically it should have been ‘staff and applicants only’, but random members of the public seemed to be going in and out freely.

“Absolutely not! What’s... what’s gotten into you?!” Arthur snapped, still heaving and wiping his mouth with a paper napkin. “I didn’t contract this brat for nothing, we have to stick with him! Haven’t you seen what sort of folk lurks around here?!”

But the pale blond just rolled his eyes, downing the rest of the disgusting wine and tossing the paper cup over his shoulder. “Come on, Artie, I’ll be fine. I can take care of myself, you know?” Because like hell he would admit that he just couldn’t stay and watch another fight and see more body parts flying around.

“Like hell you can! That infamous charming gift of yours isn’t infallible, you know? It never worked on me!”

“I never used it on you, Arthur,” Lukas said grimly.

“Dude, he’s gonna be fine,” Alfred intervened, winking behind the Englishman’s back. “No one’s gonna pick on him, I promise. They’re just too busy with watching the fights and... and shit.”

“The fuck do *you* know?!”

Lukas slipped away from the bickering pair, only mumbling a low ‘I’ll meet you guys back here’ before heading straight for the stairs. As soon as he was far enough to be out of Arthur’s sight, his assistant rolled up his jacket sleeves, making sure that Kohler’s axe-shaped mark was fully exposed.

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“Th’s pl’ce is h’ribble,” Berwald grumbled under his breath as the pair made their way under the smoke-stained stone arches and into one of the cells near the arena gate. “Are we r’lly into th’t m’ch debt?”

“Yeah...” the smaller blond by his side sighed, dropping the shoulder bag he was carrying onto one of the stone benches and proceeding to take off his jacket. “I’m really sorry, Ber, but I just fucked up again. Guess I’m bad with finances or something.” He sighed again. “And I forgot to wash this too.”

Tino pulled out his costume out of the bag, together with a wand of sorts, wooden and crooked in places. He was always attracting strange and confused stares whenever he came down in the dungeons wearing *mundane human* street clothes and looking like a helpless little boy who was simply lucky to have a dangerous looking-bodyguard from Hell by his side. Very few people here were actually able to recognize the Finn without the costume and mask he wore when he fought and the others out there would have been shocked to see what their favorite really looked like.

“Ye want the usual stuff, Reaper?” a lycan guard asked, poking their head in.

“Yep, always,” Tino confirmed cheerfully, then pulled off his shirt and gave the wooden wand to the Grim. “Quick, start drawing, we don’t have much time.”

“S g’nna h’rt,” the Swede mumbled, more to himself, since it wasn’t the first time they were doing this. “Wh’re do you w’nt th’m?” he asked, laying his large palm gently onto his contractor’s small shoulder.

“Neck, back of the neck, arms, chest, stomach and on my back. After that, I could use some on my legs too. Can’t leave any weak spots now, can we?”

Berwald got to work, fingers precisely maneuvering the wand the tip of which sparked, burning the runes into the other’s tender skin. The Finn flinched and hissed every now and then, whenever the Grim pressed the tool harder onto his body, causing the latter to groan in frustration.

“I c’n protect you j’st f’ne, you d’n’t need all th’s painf’l st’ff. I w’n’t let an’t’h’ng bad happ’n to you!”

Tino sighed again and leaned back into the Swede’s strong chest as the other paused and pressed a kiss into his soft blonde strands. “I know, Ber. Heh, that’s why I’m doing this in the first place... But it’s better if it just looks *real*, you know? People want to see really strong fighters and heroes and-”

“People j’st w’nt to see bloodsh’d,” Berwald stated with a hint of disgust. “They always did.”

“*TINO?!?*”

Lukas had pretty much gotten lost in the hallways of the dungeons which - although really poorly illuminated, smoke-infested and filthy – were as swarming with people as the common level above. It had turned out that many came down here to watch the preparations, admire slaves, close deals or offer themselves for hire, but all in all the quality of ‘patrons’ was significantly worse than of those looking for entertainment upstairs. All he could do was stare around in horror, looking for the infernal cogwheel contraptions and yet dreading the moment he would find them, unaware of the stares he was getting back and especially of the black shadow following him closely.

And then he’d reached the row of cells near one of the gates – where the sudden light had blinded him – and laid eyes on none other than his cousin!

“Tino?! What the hell are you doing here?!”

The Finn offered him a small, awkward smile, pulling away from his Grim and picking up his discarded shirt. “Actually, Lukas... I got into a bit of trouble with the money so...” he explained, putting the shirt on quickly. “I’m here to fight.”

Lukas blinked slowly, having trouble to process what he’d just heard, the disturbing image of the severed head and body dropping down in the water still lingering behind his eyelids.

“You’re here to... *what?!?*”

***To be continued***

Okay so it turns out that I suck big time because I promised action and now I’m making you wait for it. Pffft!

# Chapter 6

## CHAPTER 5

A/N – Hello, everyone! First of all, a big thanks to all my reviewers, followers and fav-ers, your support means so much to me and it always motivates me when it comes to writing! That being said, well, guess what, this time I will not pester you with irrelevant author notes (*this time*, that is), but jump right in and bring the action. ENJOY!

**Warnings:** graphic descriptions of violence

*Tsvetan – Bulgaria*

*Alin - Romania*

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“You mean... *Berwald* will fight, right? Because there’s no way in hell-”

“No, no,” Tino interrupted him, a baffling smile on his face. “Ber is a Grim and so, since there’s technically no way he could ever lose a fight, they’re banned from the matches. Contractors can, though.”

Lukas blinked, feeling wobbly on his feet as the wine from earlier made his stomach contract and his head spin and he was instantly plagued by an image of his fragile cousin in the middle of that nightmarish bloodshed, being hacked to pieces by some monster of sorts. “No, no, no, y-you can’t do this! Tino, have you even seen-...? You’re gonna... you’ll be torn to shreds in there!” he pleaded, slipping down onto one of the stone benches. “I mean, how much money do you-”

“It’s gonna be fine, I’ve done this before a couple of times,” the Finn reassured him. “And Ber will intervene if something were to go wrong, so don’t you worry, yeah?” He was horrifyingly calm as he exchanged his street clothes for a white linen shirt, a pair of striped breeches, knee-high boots and a long, brown leather overcoat with a hem which was strangely jagged and torn in places, albeit probably purposefully so. “Anyway, you didn’t tell me what brings *you* here...”

Lukas was having a really hard time processing what he’d just been told and also getting a bit of comprehension as to why Emil always mourned the lack of a *normal* family, who would take *normal* jobs and so on - not that Emil had ever objected to the ill-gotten Fendi jeans and other stuff his brother had provided back in his ‘glory’ days on the streets, but still theft was somewhat of a normal human activity – but this was really, officially too much! And he was really aching to ask just what colossal shit had Tino gotten himself into this time, if only the thought of his and Arthur’s debts hadn’t been gnawing at him – one thousand for that stupid book and God knew how much the vampire prince had asked the Englishman for this ‘valuable’ piece of information!

“I-I’m working, actually,” he said, pulling himself together a bit. “Arthur and I are currently seeking someone who owns automatons and employs them for the fights. It’s that guy selling dangerous liquor to kids – the one we were raiding when I got injured, I told you it was an automaton... Do you know anything about this?”

Tino shook his head, eyebrows raised, but in that very moment the lycan guard returned, carrying two large broadswords and offering them to Berwald.

“There you go, Reaper,” they growled, with a fang-full smile. “Nice and sharp.”

“Hey! Have you ever seen automatons around here? Or in the matches?” the Finn asked, taking the weapons from his Grim and giving them an experimental spin with a simultaneous flick of his wrists before shoving them expertly in the twin spaces in his belt.

“Auto-... what are those?”

“Sort of like tiny people, but made of metal and with wheels inside,” Lukas explained. “Have you seen them?”

The lycan scratched their head. “...aaaahh those things! Rarely they show, their master is selective when it comes to the fights. And he doesn’t sell, is what I’ve heard.”

“Do you know who owns them?”

The guard hesitated, fidgeting, so Tino plucked a golden coin from the pocket of his discarded jeans and placed it in the furry paw of the lycan.

“Well, it’s a very discreet fellow, I think Pellemargaroth’s the name, but I heard he’s the agent of someone else... someone whose name must not be spoken,” the lycan said quickly, then turned on their heels and was gone before another question would be asked.

“Oh, Tino, you shouldn’t have...” Lukas sighed, thinking how *his* only golden coin had gone on bad wine instead of information.

*‘Someone whose name must not be spoken’* Mathias thought, arms crossed and back stuck against the blackened wall as he was successfully eavesdropping on his contractor’s conversation. He had a *grim* suspicion on who that might have been – no pun intended – but hoped otherwise. No way he had such bad luck that his current contractor could have a feud with that man! Not that man, whom the Dane had fought before and had been so bitterly defeated. The one – probably *the only one* – who he didn’t think that he could protect Lukas Bondevik from! Lukas had a job apparently, one he could not be swayed from doing, but maybe annihilating that agent would be enough and he would not investigate further? Damn, this was bad...

“It’s time,” Tino said and proceeded to top his outfit with a fancy black hat, heading out of the cell.

His cousin followed numbly and only when they reached the lifting iron gate did the Norwegian realize that he’d been clinging to Berwald’s arm for support all along. He also

became aware of the rising noise, the crowd was pressing against the railings and shouting over the blasting music, one word clearly discernible in that incredible mess - 'Reaper'.

*Reaper*?! Was that his stage name? "...seriously?"

"Looks like they want me..." Tino observed with a grin and pulled out a skull mask out of his coat pocket, the next moment his childish face disappearing behind the gruesome prop. He walked out into the arena, the roar of the crowd increasing tenfold as he did, and Lukas couldn't help noticing how many young girls in the audience were cheering for his cousin, one of them even going as far as to tear the front of her gown open.

"I thought... that he's only done this a couple of times before?" he mused out loud.

Berwald only sighed in reply, adjusting his spectacles as he leaned onto one of the pillars supporting the gate which was now going back down. Still, the Norwegian figured, if needed, the Grim would have had no problem just *poofing* on the other side of the bars. But would he be fast enough to save Tino if he got into trouble?! More like 'when' than 'if'...

Meanwhile the show presenter was announcing something, his voice mostly drowned by the surrounding noise and the gate on the opposite side of the arena lifted in turn, someone (or something) emerging from the darkness beyond it. It was a giant with sickly white skin covered in a sort of scales, long braided white hair and red eyes, wearing a heavy iron breastplate with a tree-like coat of arms on his chest. The creature's weapons were two broad jagged swords which looked more like chainsaw blades and he was overall quite terrible to behold, but the slaughter addicted audience cheered for him enthusiastically.

Near the center of the pit, Tino was still waving his hand at the public, loudly acclaimed by the ladies, when the giant charged towards him without warning, with both swords raised.

"You 'lr'ght?" the Swedish Grim asked Lukas, who was about to cover his eyes again. "Sh'ld w'tch th's, m'w'fe is g'nna k'ck h's ass," he said.

Indeed, the Finn was swift to elude his opponent's attack and drew out his own swords, blocking him and in the next couple of minutes the blades crossed several times fruitlessly. However Tino's own forward attack turned out to be just as unsuccessful, the creature blocking his blow with just one of its blades, the other grazing the side of his mask and making it slip off his face.

Tino took a few steps back, frowning at the murk around his feet where the mask had dropped into and looking unsettled by the loss of anonymity, and when he lifted his arms to protect his face from his advancing opponent, it looked like the latter had a clear opening to strike. Sure enough, in the next moment the giant thrust his blade forward and the Finn lost one of his swords, drawing further back and nearly stumbling.

"D'mn, he 'lways does th't... pfft," Berwald grumbled, shifting and crossing his arms as his contractor pulled a short battle axe from the inside of his coat to replace the lost weapon and shook his head mockingly.



The giant growled, his face twisted into a vicious grimace as he lunged forward and he lifted his arm to strike. Tino's axe diverted his blow easily this time and his lighter sword thrust in full into the other's exposed armpit, where the armor was weak. As the giant halted his advance, looking suddenly confused, the Finn slipped quickly behind his back and kicked him in the back with enough force to make him fall face-down into the shallow water, and climbed onto his metal-covered back, thrusting his other sword into the back of the creature's skull.

The audience broke into a mad roar the very moment the final blow was struck and Lukas realized that he'd almost stopped breathing, eyes widened in absolute horror, and then he saw his cousin spitting over his opponent's dead body and then emphatically licking the blood off his own sword.

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"Oh God, because I was arguing with you idiot Lukas managed to sod off fuck knows where and we got stuck here!" Arthur grumbled, trying to push his way through the crowd. "We have to find him before he gets himself into trouble, because he just might, you know, he didn't get arrested for nothing!"

For once the American didn't have a comeback, instead just following obediently as they moved away from the railing and tried to make their way towards the entrance of the dungeons. Arthur had thought of calling his assistant, but with the deafening noise around there was little chance of Lukas hearing his phone ring. He was so preoccupied and annoyed by the situation that he never noticed the grim looking man heading towards him with purpose until he was grabbed brutally by a pair of iron-hard arms and lifted in the blink of an eye above the stranger's head.

"Bastard, looks like nobody taught you to pay your debts on time! Well, I'll teach you now!" the man yelled in a strong foreign accent before throwing the Englishman over the railing.

Arthur screamed as he found himself flying through the air and plunging rapidly towards the reddish mass of water where the maintenance staff was still busy gathering the giant's corpse and his discarded weapons. He didn't reach it though, as Alfred caught him in his arms in mid-fall, proceeding to land with a splash in the murk and considerably staining both their clothing.

"WHO THE FUCK IS THAT?!" the Grim shouted, jumping back up with Arthur in his arms and landing in front of the angry fellow, who seemed to be waiting for them. "WHO THE FUCK ARE YOU?! DA FUCK IS YOUR PROBLEM?!" he demanded, setting his contractor down and taking a step towards the offender.

The smaller blond observed the black-clad stranger – he was eerily pale and his raven-black hair was parted in the middle and smoothed into shining locks, while his dark green eyes were like two pools of poison. "Nobody talked to you, dog!" he replied with contempt, giving the American a quick once-over and swiftly dodging when Alfred made a move to grab him by the collar. But then someone swatted him over the head from behind forcefully, and he stumbled, his stern expression melting into one of confusion.

“Tsuetan, what the fuck are you doing?! If you keep trying to kill my debtors, I’ll never get my money you twat!”

Arthur exhaled – not necessarily in relief - as he recognized the person who had just spoken, none other than his precious informant. *Prince* Alin was quite ancient but looked strikingly youthful having been turned at only seventeen (and to the present day it must have been a feat he was using to make people underestimate him) and was donning a posh, dark-red velvet long jacket with black embroidery and his light-brown hair tinged with copper was artfully arranged in rebellious locks.

“Sirs, I humbly apologize for the uselessness and awful manners of my servant,” the vampire said ceremoniously – yet not without a hint of irony – as he swatted the brunet over the head one more time, forcing him to bow in front of the two.

“But he’s one of-”

“Be quiet, Tsuetan!”

“Well, you’re doing a fucking job of keeping him in check!” Alfred pointed, shoving his finger under the prince’s nose, but the other gracefully ignored him, sauntering to where Arthur stood and lightly taking his arm.

“Now, Artie, I *really* don’t want you to feel pressured,” Alin said smoothly and, throwing a quick glance towards his baffled and still angry servant, leaned in and kissed the Englishman on the mouth in an absolutely shameless manner. After that, he offered them a smile and just as gracefully walked away, dragging with him the other vampire, whose eyes were now wide in shock and sported a hurt and confused expression once more.

“What the fuck is going on?! *HE KISSED YOU!*” the Grim shouted. “What is the meaning of this?!”

Arthur looked up at the other blond’s flustered expression and reddened cheeks and a smirk nearly made its way on his lips. “...the *meaning* of this? Hmmm...”

“What is the meaning of what?”

Lukas had left the Finn and his Grim to bask in their success and collect their monetary reward, in all truth shocked enough for one night. Aside from this stupefying discovery, he’d also been casually informed that successful and popular fighters had the option (if they were free, since the slaves were kept in the dungeons at all times) of ‘staying overnight’ and offering their bodies to generous and interested patrons for extra gains. However, Tino had firmly reassured him that he for one would never do that...

“Where the hell have you been?!” his boss inquired ill-humoredly, further displeased by the way the other was eyeing his stained trousers. They were more likely destined for the trash bin than the laundry by the state they were in. “What if something were to happen to you down there, all alone?!”

“It’s okay, really,” the pale blond replied with an awkward laugh, quickly pulling his sleeves down (luckily Arthur hadn’t noticed anything). “I-... ah, met my cousin down there, he was with his Grim so I was safe the whole time!” he said. “And I found out who owns the automatons – it’s a guy named Pellemargaroht. But it seems that he’s the agent of someone else...”

“The agent of someone else...” the Englishman concluded dryly.

“Yeah, someone who cannot be named. Like it’s forbidden to speak of him or something,” Lukas explained shrugging. “So what were you arguing about just now? Did anything happen?”

“Are you kidding me?!” Alfred cried. “He just got-”

“The prince showed up,” Arthur clarified, rolling his eyes. “And his stupid servant pulled a nasty stunt on me and-”

“He kissed him on the mouth!” the Grim nearly shouted, his burst of outrage attracting more than a few glances.

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After that, they decided to call it a night and research what they could find on the mysterious Pellemargaroht on the following days, possibly through other contacts from the magic community. Arthur for one was of the opinion that Allistor might prove helpful in the matter, but obviously not before he was paid the thousand golden coins for the Book of Grims – and this *was* going to be a problem.

“Come on, stupid red coat,” the American Grim said as soon as they were back at the headquarters. “I saved your sorry arse tonight, so you have to pay me...”

Lukas flinched involuntarily, gaze trailing towards his own fingertips, from which the blasted book had drawn blood the first time he’d touched it. *Blood, the payment is blood and a contractor must let the Grim drink their blood, from time to time and especially after the Grim has actually done something to protect them...* Obviously, it was no established procedure for this, the book didn’t say *how* and he wondered... all the more since Tino had mentioned that some Grims liked to make the payment part particularly rough. And Alfred had seemed to loathe Arthur from the very beginning and now he was pissed about something too, although the Norwegian refused to believe that it was because of the ‘outrageous’ kiss the vampire prince had given Arthur, most likely in mockery. He couldn’t have been jealous or anything, right?

He slipped quietly into the small kitchenette as the pair withdrew into Arthur’s bedroom and the door closed behind them... and waited. Tension seeped gradually into every fiber of his body as minutes passed and he simply stood there, slightly hunched over the tabletop he was resting his forearms on, ears perked on picking up any sound.

He couldn't really *ask* Arthur afterwards, could he? Eventually, the pale blond peeled himself off from his spot and crept towards the corridor with light steps. Going back to his own room, snorting some more fairy dust and just passing out sounded like a better plan right now and Lukas had his mind made up, that is until he passed Arthur's door and something like a moan reached his ears, making him freeze on the spot.

Slowly, inaudibly and nearly holding his breath, he kneeled down and carefully peeked through the empty keyhole. More of those disturbing sounds were now coming from the inside and his eyes widened in horror at what he was seeing.

*No, no, no, no... I can't do this! No, this is...*

No way. No fucking way he could ever let the wild Dane touch him like that, do *those things*, torment him every time he would need feeding! No, the hell with this contract – there was a way out of it after all and Lukas decided to take it right away.

***To be continued***

# Chapter 7

## CHAPTER 6

A/N – Hello, my dear readers! Again, thank you so much for all your amazing support, it really means a lot to me that you're enjoying this as much as I do! Anyway, I'm back with a new chap (even later than I had anticipated, damn!) so enjoy ;)

*Luca Majerus – Luxembourg*

*Anri Majerus – Belgium*

*Andrei – Moldova*

*Leon – Hong Kong*

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The next morning the kitchen was ominously quiet and Lukas almost tiptoed in, flinching in surprise to discover his boss perched onto one of the bar stools, thoughtfully nursing a cup of black tea. The Norwegian observed him intently before gingerly slipping into a seat next to him, having noticed nothing aside from a faint bruise on the side of Arthur's neck, partly concealed by the collar of his crisp dress shirt.

"Where's Alfred?" he asked tentatively, fingertips flying nervously to toy with the *rubirosa* ring he'd put on the previous night. According to Tino's instructions, the *rubirosa* ring could make a contractor invisible to his Grim as long as they wore it on their finger, but now he wondered whether the American would be able to tell as well and if yes... what if... ? Technically Alfred could divulge his secret to Arthur and maybe even help the Dane get his hands on him! Now that would be really bad!

The green-eyed blond shrugged and sighed softly. "Starbucks," he replied bluntly, then shifted his gaze to Lukas. "I think he's jealous or something..." he added, with a small unexpected chuckle. "He got seriously worked up last night."

"But I thought... that he really loathed you!" *And with what I saw and heard last night...* It was odd though, because Arthur didn't seem to be in such a bad shape. Maybe he had misinterpreted things? But he was quite sure that-

"Fuck knows, but it really got to him that the prince kissed me."

"Why *did* the prince kiss you anyway? Was he... by any chance offering you an alternative to payment?"

Arthur shrugged. "Oh, he was just fucking around, but no. Not that I would awfully mind it, he's a cute kid and I have no money," he said with a small chuckle. "Speaking *of*, we'll have

to do something about it soon.”

---

A soft, warm breeze was sifting through the trees in front of the Luxembourg cathedral and across the tourist-filled square, a pale autumn sun casting its rays over the old stone buildings around. Mathias sighed and leaned on his forearms onto the stone railing, staring blankly at the large park spreading below the massive wall. He'd chosen a simple black Armani suit and matching shades for the occasion, looking like a businessman on his lunch break at that hour, and the funny thing was... well, he was here on business.

Actually, it wasn't funny at all.

And Mathias was angry with himself and blamed himself the most for this blasted mishap. During his rather lengthy career as a Grim, the Dane had always served his contractors in good faith and that was why – he'd naively supposed – he'd never had any problems with his contracts, he'd never messed up, even if things had been quite tough upon more than one occasion. Still, he was no spring chicken and he shouldn't have been so quick to trust the pale blond boy who looked like a fairy prince, even if... well, truth be told he'd heard of no one with the skill to forge a functional *rubirosa* jewel in the past three hundred years or so. Because this was what the little imp must have used to be able to vanish in this manner, making his Grim feel as if he'd never existed.

Yet the contract was still valid and the troublesome contractor very much present, reason for which Mathias was still in this world – having been left to starve, too! – instead of going back to hell. Thus, he had no choice but to resort to the help of the powerful Majerus family, even if he loathed their kind and lacked the necessary insurance. The Dane still had some money left from what he'd collected, but doubted it would be enough. Most likely he would be required to do some of their dirty work in return...

Sighing, he straightened his back and peeled away his shades, stuffing them in his suit pocket as he crossed the square with large strides, making his way to an ivy-covered entrance visible in one remote corner of the square. The massive oak door covered in pristine black polish opened before Mathias even got the chance to reach for the doorbell and a pale, black-clad Asian girl showed up in the frame.

“Welcome, Mr. Kohler,” she spoke softly, in an accented voice. “Master is already expecting you.”

The Dane refrained from rolling his eyes as he followed her into the dark, wainscoted corridor, plagued by an unsettling feeling. “So... how old is your master?” he asked casually, for conversation's sake and also out of suspicion that it was a sensitive subject bound to irk the staff.

“Seventeen,” the girl replied. “But he's already married, since he must produce an heir and all. Mortals are like that,” she added with a bored shrug, flipping a long strand of luscious raven hair over her thin shoulder. *A vampire*, Mathias realized, and marveled at the number of

silver rings decorating her small hand. For a vampire to wear silver jewelry and not be scorched by it, their master sorcerer had to be particularly powerful. “Look, there she is.”

“Who?” the Grim asked, although he’d already spotted the blonde young woman observing him with interest from the top of a large stone staircase.

“His wife,” the servant replied, motioning to the stairs. “It’s that way, straight ahead.” And she was gone, seemingly melting into the shadows hovering along the ancient walls.

Mathias climbed the worn staircase with even, unhurried steps, his gaze locked with the blonde’s, who was now smiling openly. She was very pretty, with large green eyes and curly locks held back by a green ribbon and she was wearing an emerald-colored sundress which complimented her complexion. Still, she looked a bit older than seventeen.

“Mr. Kohler, we’ve been expecting you,” she spoke, giving the Dane an appreciative once-over which was just a tad too straightforward. “I’m Anri Majerus.”

“It’s lovely to meet you, Mrs. Majerus,” he said, taking the offered hand and lightly pressing his lips against the delicate knuckles. “And I’m grateful that your husband has agreed to see me, on such short notice too.”

“Please, call me Anri,” the blonde replied, seeming to ignore the comment. “So, Mr. Kohler, what does it take to get a man like you?” she then asked, leading the way forward down a short, brightly-lit corridor at the end of which some tall, gold-painted double doors loomed.

“A contract,” Mathias answered automatically, before even realizing that the question had made him cringe. Was Anri Majerus seriously trying to flirt with him? Or maybe this was some sort of test? Well, if that was what it was, the extreme bad taste of it was indubitable. “I’m sure that your husband can explain everything to you in great detail, if you’re interested,” he added quickly, with somewhat of a cramped smile, before smoothly slipping away from her to knock on the door.

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The first thing Mathias saw as he entered the spacious, richly furnished office was a large and fluffy white dog, sprawled lazily onto the Persian rug. The animal’s dull brown eyes took him in with almost unusual disinterest, but the Dane still stared a bit, amazed by the sheer size of the pet. His master sat at an elegant, polished desk in the back and lifted his gaze upon his entrance, shaking perfectly combed golden bangs off his turquoise-green eyes.

Luca Majerus was lean and fragile looking, with an even more youthful appearance than his real age, but his pale porcelain face had an openly smug and superior expression which hardened his features and made them somewhat unpleasant to behold. He graciously rose from behind his desk to invite his guest to a seat nearby and – Mathias thought – also probably to assess the effect of his posh outfit – a tight white vest over a finely striped, light blue shirt, white riding breeches and knee-high, perfectly polished leather boots.

*To hell with this brat...* the Dane inwardly cursed as he offered some meaningless pleasantries to his host, taking a seat in the indicated chair across from the boy.

“So, Mr. Kohler, you don’t have a contract with us,” Luca cut to the chase without further formalities. “But your contractor has disappeared on you? I suppose you’d like our help with that?”

Mathias nodded slowly, with a sigh. “I can pay you,” he stated, with a heavy heart. Although perhaps he shouldn’t have said that before actually hearing the price for said help.

“I see...” the Luxembourger observed, with an air which ironically spelled ‘can you?’ “Why don’t you tell me more, then? I’m sure there must be something we can do to get to the bottom of this troublesome situation.”

The Grim began to speak, words pouring reluctantly out of his mouth as he spilled out the little he knew about his contractor and the circumstances in which he’d seen the blasted Norwegian operate. Meanwhile, Luca opened one of his desk drawers and pulled out a crystal globe which looked mundane enough to be taken for a bad joke and rang a small golden bell three times. The doors opened and two boys walked in, donning the same full-black attire as the servant Mathias had been let in earlier. One was Asian as well, with longish, wispy raven hair, smooth features and amber eyes, while the other was white and skimpy looking despite the expensive fabric of his garments, his mouse-brown hair rather tousled and long bangs falling into his bright red eyes. And, just like the girl, they were both vampires and both wore a ridiculous amount of silver jewelry.

“These are my assistants, Andrei and Leon,” Majerus explained, motioning with this hand curtly.

The red-eyed boy – whose name was Andrei – walked up to his master’s desk and sat down in Luca’s lap quite nonchalantly, gracing the Dane with a bored gaze while the master’s long, elegant fingers proceeded to stroke his hair and brush it away from his forehead.

*Seriously, fuck this household!*

“I can assure you that I’ve never done anything to make him fear me or to cause him the slightest discomfort. Why do you suppose he decided to disappear on me like that?” Mathias asked in conclusion, partly to dissipate the substantial awkwardness which was creeping on him at the moment.

“Well, I suppose some people, especially if they’re young, are inherently frightened by something as permanent and inescapable as a Grim contract. Still, it’s not an excuse,” Luca stated. “We will find this unruly fellow and deliver him into your hands.”

After that, Majerus and his apparently favorite assistant set to work examining the crystal globe and whispering to one another, while on the floor the large dog continued to doze off and the other vampire remained rooted on the spot, motionless, like a statue. Mathias resisted the urge to fidget in the tight suit which wasn’t exactly his usual choice of clothing and to loosen his tie as he sighed discreetly, on the brink of regretting his decision to come here. Truth be told, he found the young Luca Majerus creepy in a very particular and disturbing



fashion, far more than any of his vampire assistants and probably more than most of the unsavory characters he'd had to deal with in the course of his 'career'.

"Ah!" the Luxembourger exclaimed eventually, leaning forward on his elbows as Andrei slipped off his lap. "We have discovered something very interesting: it seems that your contractor – Lukas Bondevik – has eluded you with the help of his cousin, a Mr. Tino Väinämöinen. Do you know this person?"

The Dane shook his head.

"Well, apparently he has the ability to produce *rubirosa* jewels..." Luca muttered, his displeasure evident as he dug out a ledger from one of his desk drawers and began to leaf through it hurriedly.

"The name is familiar, I think he too is contracted," Leon offered. "And his Grim has an insurance policy with us."

"Oh? Then it should be easy," the teen concluded and tossed aside the ledger, beginning to type something on his laptop instead. "Indeed, look! He's currently contracted to Mr. Berwald Oxenstierna! I want him summoned here right away!"

*Oh Hell...* Mathias knew this name, having had a couple of run-ins with the grumpy Swedish Grim in the past. Not the kind of man to have a dispute with, if one could avoid it, he reckoned, even if Majerus would be doing the talking this time. And he really didn't think this would go well, or *easy* for that matter, considering that Berwald had actually paid Majerus for insurance, while he had not. However, this was also a sign that Berwald most likely didn't trust his own contractor, so maybe the newly uncovered information would be of interest to him? Mathias could only hope it would be enough to counter the trouble that Luca Majerus was about to cause the Swede.

Leon left the room for about ten minutes, during which the Dane was exposed to more of the wizard's shameless and tasteless flirting with his favorite vampire, after which he returned, ushering Berwald Oxenstierna into the room. The Swede looked less rugged these days than Mathias remembered, his unkempt beard was gone and the hair trimmed much shorter, and an elegant pair of silver-rimmed glasses adorned his icy features. His clothes were still dark but softer, more elegant and Mathias couldn't help thinking – not without a tinge of sadness - that the man must have gotten softer as of late.

Berwald threw a cautious glance around before sitting down into the chair he'd been offered and proceeding to grace the Dane with a suspicious stare. "Wh't is th's about?" he grumbled.

"The question is, Mr. Oxenstierna, do *you* know what is going on?" Luca Majerus interfered.

"Wh't is-"

"Are you aware, generally speaking, of what your current contractor is up to?" the wizard went on, pausing slightly to give his words time to sink in. "Are you aware that he is creating – and possibly selling too! – *rubirosa* jewels right under your nose?!"

Berwald tensed visibly – his surprise and chagrin evident – and his hands clenched slightly in his lap, but he said nothing, only shaking his head vigorously.

Luca sighed. “Mr. Oxenstierna, as you have deemed fit to sign an insurance policy with us, I’m sure you understand how unfortunate and even onerous this situation is for all of us. For example, we are quite certain that Mr. Kohler’s contractor – who happens to be your contractor’s cousin - has used one of these *rubirosa* jewels to give him the slip! Due to this fact and to the responsibility we have towards all Grims who have concluded insurance contracts with our house, I’m afraid we will have to bring your contractor in for questioning. Right away.”

***To be continued***

A/N – Oh yes, and now I really got Tino into trouble...

# Chapter 8

## CHAPTER 7

A/N – Hello, everyone! Guess what, now that my workload has eased up a bit, I will do my best to update more often (or *die tryin'*, as the classics say) That being said, thanks so much for the support you're showing this story and damn, let's bring on some more drama. Enjoy ;)

**Warnings:** some really disturbing shit, drama, and a chip of HongIce (if you get my meaning)

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The small apartment was quiet albeit for the faint sounds of Tino's cooking utensils being employed in the kitchen. Knees drawn up to his chest, Emil was sulking in front of the TV, plagued by the constant bad mood which had become chronic with him these days. Even though he hadn't been born with any magic abilities and was completely unable to understand how they worked with the others, the youngest of the family could not ignore the growing foreboding he'd woken up with today. He just couldn't, even if Tino had told him it was probably nothing. Because Tino, just like his brother, never told him anything and insisted on treating him like a child. His feeling only grew stronger as he saw the tall, quiet Swedish *Grim* (whatever the fuck this being was, anyway!) storming through the front door and into the kitchen with an ever scarier face than usual.

Berwald sighed in momentary relief as he saw his contractor peacefully busying himself with preparing lunch, yet his chagrined expression did not ease one bit as he quietly walked behind the Finn and wrapped his arms around him ever so gently. Larger hands covered Tino's, halting his movements as the Grim pressed his body against his, leaning over to murmur in his ear.

"T'no, l'sten t' me v'rry c'rf'lly now," he began softly. "I t'ld you ab'ut L'ca M'jerus... it seems th't he f'und out ab'ut you m'king *r'bir'sa j'w'ls*..."

Tino went suddenly stiff and his eyes widened, and for a moment he forgot how to breathe. After that, he turned slowly, swallowing hard. "B-Berwald, I swear! I never-... I did not make them... I would never use it against you, never!" he cried, choking as his hands fisted into the other's jacket lapels.

"I kn'w! I kn'w but I c'n't pr'ect you w'th th's! Pleas' j'st do wh't they say," the Swede mumbled pleadingly, pressing a quick kiss to his forehead. "J'st do wh't they say 'nd g've th'm wh't they w'nt 'nd you'll be okay, please!"

In the next moment the front door flew open and two black-clad figures made their way in, scanning their surroundings curiously. As they removed the hoods covering their faces, it turned out that they were Luca Majerus's two vampire assistants, Andrei and Leon.

“Mr. Oxenstierna, Mr. Väinämöinen, I’m afraid it’s time,” Andrei stated formally, motioning for the door. “You’ll have to come with us right away.”

Meanwhile, Leon turned toward the living-room, his attention drawn by the boy staring at them wide-eyed, with an expression of frozen horror as he kept hugging his knees to his chest. An excited grin broke on the vampire’s face upon the discovery and he walked up to the couch, leaning in front of the teen’s face.

“Well, well, what have we here...” he drawled, reaching out to lift Emil’s chin with two ring-laden fingers. “Who are you?”

Emil was unable to move, staring into those surreal amber eyes watching him with shameless greed, unable to help thinking that the vampire was the most beautiful person he’d ever seen, and also the most accursed. He was trapped, bewitched as he took in every detail of that perfect, porcelain-pale face framed by luscious wisps of raven-black hair.

“G’t aw’y fr’m th’ boy or we’ll h’ve words,” Berwald growled warningly. “H’s not ev’n a s’rcer’r!”

“That’s a disappointment,” Leon said, still grinning and fully aware of the effect of his presence over his intended prey. “But still... it’s been a while since I’ve seen – or tasted – such a beautiful child. What do you think, Andrei? Should we collect some spoils of war this time?”

“Stop trolling useless little kids, Leon. That’s like a whole new degree of lame,” the other vampire grumbled annoyed. “And this is not a war. You’ve never seen a real war, you damn brat! Now stop wasting time, we’ve got things to do!”

---

Mathias was growing more and more worried as to how things would unfold next and nearly jumped out of his seat when the two vampires returned, escorting Berwald Oxenstierna and a small blond youth (who must have been the infamous *rubirosa* maker, Väinämöinen) into the room. Was this guy really Bondevik’s cousin? The Dane observed him keenly, looking for similarities, but aside from the soft, blond hair and the delicate frame, he could see none.

Sitting leisurely behind his ornate desk, Luca Majerus looked beyond smug and confident in the success of his endeavor and suddenly Mathias found this more disturbing than anything. What was the sorcerer planning?! How was he intending to make Väinämöinen give up his cousin?

“Mr. Väinämöinen, I believe you know why you’re here, don’t you?” the Luxembourger asked, his voice deceptively soft and calm. “My family, as the traditional protectors of Grim interests in this world, cannot but find completely unacceptable the things you have done. Do you understand?” When Tino said nothing in reply, looking worried but stubborn, the boy’s composure began to slip and irritation seeped into his tone. “A sorcerer must be aware that magic has to be used responsibly,” he spat, “Yet you, Mr. Väinämöinen, have entered this contract with a mind to be irresponsible and you have encouraged others to behave in an

equally irresponsible manner! It is intolerable! Intolerable! What have you to say for yourself?!”

*Intolerable!* Despite the gravity of the situation, Mathias found himself thinking that waving a cane would have been the last thing Luca Majerus needed to look and sound completely like an old fart, which was striking considering that he was only seventeen.

The Finn gulped, hands fisting at his sides, and he turned briefly to look at his Grim before eventually speaking. “I-I’ve never done anything against Berwald! And I would never-“

“I don’t give a fuck about *Berwald!*” Majerus interrupted him. “I want to know where your cousin is, and you *will* tell me! Look, his Grim is here” he pointed at the Dane, “after being left to rot alive in this world for no reason!”

Okay so maybe Lukas could have actually bothered to tell his cousin that he’d already made use of the *rubirosa* ring instead of Tino finding out about it from Majerus, of all people. Tino could have used at least a warning about this rash decision, because using a *rubirosa* ring was in fact a bad idea. A very bad and dangerous idea. But so was getting into a Grim contract for that matter, and he’d damn well warned Lukas about it too... He stared at the other Grim, trying to ascertain whether he was indeed a threat worth eluding and rather surprised that the man seemed a tad uncomfortable by what was going on. But perhaps appearances were deceitful and he was actually dangerous. Perhaps he’d already done something to hurt Lukas...

“I-I can’t...” he stuttered.

The Luxembourger sighed, standing from his chair. “I don’t have time for this bullshit. Andrei, Leon!”

At his sign the two vampire assistants were upon Tino in the blink of an eye and they forced him down into a chair (something undoubtedly meant to frighten him further, because normally only one of them would have been more than enough to restrain him). Then, Luca Majerus opened another drawer and pulled out an object which looked a lot like a branding iron of sorts. He murmured a quick incantation and the tip of the object began to glow.

“No, wait! You don’t have to do this!” Mathias nearly shouted, standing from his seat. “Listen-... Mr. Väi-...nämöinen, I swear to you that I’ve done nothing to hurt or to scare your cousin! I don’t know why he did this but if we can talk-“

“This is out of your hands now, Mr. Kohler,” Majerus cut him off coldly. “*Talk?* Frankly, given the amount of time you’ve been around, your naivety is disturbing.”

“You can give your cousin a call and tell him to take off the *rubirosa* jewel right now or you can get a brand and you’ll lose most of your magic abilities if not all of them,” Andrei informed the Finn with a sickly sweet smile.

“Wha-?”

“It’s simple – either this,” the vampire explained, holding a cell phone under Tino’s nose. “Or *that*,” he pointed to the tool Luca was weighing rather impatiently in his hand as he walked up to the chair, towering over his prisoner.

Mathias threw a quick look at the Swedish Grim standing motionless near the door, his arms crossed and his jaw set in an expression of cold fury mixed with self-blame. Was it because this incident was destroying his otherwise pristine reputation or because he really cared about his contractor? Still, he *had* concluded an insurance policy with Majerus, so-...

“Please call him!” he heard himself say, as the smaller blond was still hesitating, despite being horrified. “I’m not gonna do anything to hurt him, haven’t you read the Book?! I really wouldn’t hurt myself as well just to torment him, I’m not a fucking nutjob! And I don’t mind if he keeps the jewel, I’ll just do that-... as a sign of good faith, okay?! There’s no need for you to get hurt!!” Yet just as he was saying that, the Dane suddenly wondered whether Majerus wasn’t actually planning to hurt Berwald’s contractor anyway, considering how the *rubirosa* jewels were affecting his business.

“Ha! ‘*There’s no need to get hurt*’?! Is that what a Viking would say?” Andrei asked rhetorically, his long-nailed fingers descending and digging into Tino’s shoulder. “Someone’s gone soft lately...”

Mathias was about to say something in reply, when a horrible scream resounded in the room and he saw that the teen sorcerer had brought down the branding iron onto Tino’s forearm. He only pressed it for a few seconds, but it was enough to have the Finn slumping in his seat as if drained of all vital strength, beads of sweat covering his forehead as he panted hard and reached for the phone with his good hand, the injured one now hanging limply at his side.

And now it would be bad, the Dane thought, watching the prisoner punching in the number with trembling fingers and then mumbling something he could not really focus on while tears had begun sliding down the young man’s reddened cheeks. All this time, he could feel Berwald’s icy gaze trained on him, promising hell. Well, that was what he was getting for asking Majerus’s help, not that he’d had any other choice... Mathias was only pulled from his musings when a few minutes later something like a jolt of electricity passed through his body and suddenly he could feel Lukas’s presence again. Momentarily the image of a dark basement used as a rather pathetic habitation and office space took over his mind and he saw the pale blond Norwegian curled up onto a shabby sofa, cell phone still in his hand as he stared blankly at something on the floor with an expression of pure horror. It was a small, silver ring with a tell-tale red stone.

“Th’t’s enough! He d’d wh’t you ask’d h’m! Let h’m go!” Berwald growled, stepping forward and pushing Andrei and Leon roughly away from Tino’s chair.

The Luxembourger shrugged, even if the look of irritation still persisted on his face. “I will, *for now*... But if something like this happens again, if I discover that someone else is using a rubirosa jewel, I will get my hands on you again, Mr. Väinämöinen, and this time *I will* go all the way with the branding and you will lose all your magic powers!”

---

When it was all said and done, Mathias was left with a substantial debt and a particularly sour mood. A dark frown was on his face as he followed Berwald down the stairs and out into the street, the other Grim carrying his nearly fainted contractor in his arms as he would a small child.

“Look, Berwald, I’m sorry about this, okay?” the Dane began, running a hand through his wild hair. “I just wanted my contractor back, I had no idea you had anything to do with this and I didn’t think Majerus would-”

“Put me down,” Tino murmured softly, eyes fluttering open and Berwald did as he was told, concern written all over his face as he focused on his lover and completely ignored the other. The Finn stood straight on the pavement and wiped his tearstained cheeks, pulling his shirt sleeve over the horrible burnt scar which had already begun to fade, all the while avoiding his boyfriend’s gaze. Then, suddenly, he looked up at Berwald and looked him straight in the eye, heartbreak and chagrin all over his features before morphing into an ice-cold hostility. “We’re done,” he told the Swede, lips pressed together in determination. “We’re *so* done now! Stay the fuck away from me!”

With that he turned his back on the other two men and walked away, leaving his Grim frozen in place, staring in absolute shock. By the time Berwald actually managed to process what had just transpired, Tino had already disappeared into a side alley.

“B’st’rd! B’cause ‘f you I l’st m’ w’fe!” the Swede growled in Mathias’s direction, throwing him an evil glare before rushing after his contractor.

“Did he say he lost his wi-... ?” Mathias muttered to himself as he blinked, uselessly struggling to comprehend what he’d just heard, because it made zero sense. “And people say *I* utter stupidities...”

It didn’t matter though. At least the Swede hadn’t grabbed him by the throat or something, not that they could do any lasting damage to one another, but still, it would have been a nuisance. And he now had other, more important problems to take care of, like paying Luca Majerus and... dealing with the absolute king of trolls that was Lukas Bondevik.

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Lukas couldn’t move from his spot on the sofa and it seemed that each passing moment rendered him more and more petrified, numbing him with the growing dread. He’d taken off the *rubirosa* ring right away, yet nothing seemed to have happened. There was still no sign of Kohler and Tino had not called back to say if he was okay now.

“Lukas? What’s going on?”

The Norwegian turned his head slowly, finally noticing Arthur standing by the side of the sofa and watching him quizzically. He gulped, unable to find his words. It wasn’t enough that he’d gotten Tino in serious trouble, now Arthur would be disappointed too, because he wouldn’t have ended up with the extreme pain in the ass that was Alfred F. Jones if he had only told him the truth.

“I’ll tell you what’s going on,” said American intervened, the shadow of a smirk tugging at the corners of his mouth. “Your lovely assistant here didn’t tell you, but he’s contracted too. And he thought he was smart enough to get out of his contract too, and now he’s quite fucked.”

The green-eyed blond opened his mouth to say something as Lukas finally mustered the strength to stand from his spot and took off all of his protection pendants, tossing them down on the cushions followed by his jeans jacket. “Arthur, it was nice meeting you,” was all he said before walking quietly towards his bedroom.

*To be continued*

**A/N – I’m so great, I managed to ruin Berwald and Tino’s relationship. And... Lukas is fucked now.**



# Chapter 9

## CHAPTER 8

A/N – Hello, my dear readers! I was trying really hard to update this (well, to do *at least one* update until Christmas) and guess what, looks like I succeeded! Anyway, as always, thank you guys so much for your support, you're amazing and it means a lot to me! And now, without further ado, enjoy the new chap ;)

**Warnings:** *some really disturbing stuff, yaoi*

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Heart pounding madly in his chest, Lukas finally mustered the courage to press the knob and open the door to his small bedroom. Something-... no, *someone* was waiting for him past that very door – he could feel it and knew exactly *who* – and there was no escaping anyway now. Better get it over with, regardless of what ‘getting it over with’ entailed, the Norwegian kept repeating to himself, even if at this point the terror had become choking and nearly crippled his body.

The room was almost completely dark, save for a few weak rays of light from the streetlamps outside, pouring in through the twin windows near the ceiling. Indeed, Lukas's room was pretty much a fucking dungeon and he would probably die here, too. Very soon. It took only a few moments for his eyes to adjust to the semi-obscurity (for some reason he couldn't get himself to switch on the light, no, it was easier like this) and then he saw the Dane, sitting into the single, worn armchair under the windows, wild hair shading his eyes and hands resting casually on the handle of his enormous battle axe, which was propped against the floor.

“Well, well.... long time no see, Mr. Bondevik,” the Grim spoke, giving the axe a slow spin with a light flick of his fingers. The upper edge of the blade scraped and screeched against the cement and a sinister gleam shone across its polished surface. The blade was so clean and sharp that one could probably see their reflection on it. “Tell me, did you really think that you could... simply... piss against the wind and get away with it? Hmmm?”

Lukas took a deep breath, fists clenching helplessly at his sides. Right, at least... “Is my cousin alright?! What have you done with him?!” he inquired, in a tone much less firm than he'd intended. “I-I've done what you asked so-”

“Of course he's alright,” Mathias said. “I've no quarrel with him, he's done nothing wrong. And he was released right away.”

Lukas nodded slowly, gulping. At least Tino was okay – for some reason he trusted the Grim's word on it, but his cousin probably hadn't called because he was angry (and Tino's bouts of anger were not something to be taken lightly!). “I-I'm sorry,” he stuttered awkwardly, not knowing what else to say and quite sure that whatever he said wouldn't cut it

anyway. The Grim had physically been starving without his blood, so a simple apology or explanation couldn't possibly make up for that.

And right he was.

"You're sorry?" the Dane asked lightly, as if amused, standing from his seat, hand still resting on the handle of his infernal weapon. "That's a good one." He took a step forward, the tip of the axe screeching louder against the floor as it was dragged, and Lukas felt suddenly sick to the stomach.

"I-I'm really sorry! I'll never do that again, I swear! I'll never put the ring on again, I swea-"

"Of course you won't," Mathias agreed calmly, drawing closer, "Because I'm going to cut off all your fingers." As he said that, he snapped his own fingers and the axe in his hand disappeared, replaced by a short, broad hunting knife.

The Norwegian blinked, frozen in horror, eyes hypnotically drawn to the blade which was drawing closer and closer to him. His breath hitched in his throat as his back pressed helplessly against the closed door, before his legs eventually gave out and he dropped on his knees. "Please... d-don't! Please..."

"Hmm... you look good on your knees," the other snorted, tilting his head, knife weighed impatiently in his hand. "Get up."

"N-No, please!" Lukas begged, instinctively trying to curl up against the wall. "I-I'll do anything you want, I swear! Just don't-"

But the Grim leaned forward and gripped his shoulder abruptly, pulling him to his feet and catching one of his wrists with his free hand. And that was the last thing the smaller blond was aware of before passing out brusquely, going limp in the Grim's arms. Mathias sighed, rolling his eyes, because it had been a really long day and an even longer night was ahead of him. This was just unbelievable – look *who* had managed to kick him to the curb! He carried his unconscious contractor to the bed and laid him down carefully, before setting out to work to make sure the unruly young sorcerer would not escape him again anytime soon.

---

Dawn was breaking when Lukas woke up again, feeling dizzy and slightly nauseous, gripped by a very strange feeling. Just what-...? *No... No, he's here and he said he would-*

He jerked up brusquely from where he'd been lying on his front, instantly aware of the protruding chill of the unheated room and realizing he was shirtless. Sitting up fully, the Norwegian stared in horror at his hands, but his fingers were intact. Instead, there was something like a prick on his left shoulder blade, something stinging and pulling uncomfortably at his skin as he slumped, burying his face in his hands.

"Look at him, he's disappointed..." a voice said ironically and the pale blond turned brusquely, discovering the Grim who was back in the shabby armchair, observing him

intently. Now that there was a bit more light in the room, his features were more visible, making him appear perfectly human. *Even if he is anything but...* He now wore a pair of black jeans and a dark red, long sleeved t-shirt and his voice and his accent were different too, it was obvious that he'd somehow become adapted to the time and place he was in, just like the American had.

"Wha-... What did you do to me?" Lukas whispered, staring apprehensively at the other. Because something had changed, he felt different. Maybe his magic had been weakened somehow?

"I put some runes on your back," Mathias explained. "Just to make sure you're not getting any *other* unfortunate ideas. Otherwise, they won't bother you, it just hurts a little bit at first."

The sorcerer's hand instantly tried to reach the aching spot, but he failed and exhaled loudly. "You mean... you *carved* them into my back?" This was what the knife must have been for! "Fuck! I-I must get a bandage-"

"Calm down," the Dane said, rolling his eyes. "It's not a *wound*, it's not bleeding or anything. They're just like the mark on your arm, only... a tad stronger magic-wise, let's say."

Because that was just what Lukas needed – more gruesome magic marks on his body – the scar left by the automaton's blade and the black axe tattoo weren't bad enough. "So, did you get your fill while I was out cold?"

"No, I waited. I thought you should be awake when it happens."

Lukas snorted bitterly. "Of course you did... Why would you waste the opportunity to torment me? I guess you're planning to make that a part of my punishment too, don't you... why not make the most of it."

"I wanted you to be awake so that you can see that there was nothing for you to be afraid of in the first place, you troll!" Mathias replied sharply, leaning forward in his seat. "You didn't read the book carefully, did you?! Why does no one read the fucking book carefully these days before sealing a fucking contract?!"

"What do you-"

"Every time you feel any sort of physical pain, *I* feel it too! That's why protecting you is my job and also *my punishment*! Do you think I would consider torturing you under these circumstances?! When I said I would cut off your fingers I was merely gauging your ignorance. It's nothing short of impressive, I must say!"

And now Lukas was confused. Was that really true? Tino had told him that some Grims enjoyed being rough with their contractors during feeding time and not only then, and he'd seen-... He didn't know what *exactly*, because the next day Arthur had looked surprisingly fine, but...

"Did Alfred Jones say something, by any chance?" Mathias asked, resting his chin in his hand. He remembered seeing the American together with his contractor and another young

man back at the arena, so a sudden suspicion arose as to the potential source of this mishap.

The pale blond scowled, drawing his knees to his chest awkwardly. Should he really tell the Grim what he'd seen and heard that night? It didn't matter, only his memories were still clouded by the horror of it – a chair had been toppled over, the sounds of torn fabric, those inhuman growls, Arthur moaning in pain, pleading... And then Alfred had openly told him that he was fucked after using the *rubirosa* ring.

Mathias scrubbed a hand over his face and sighed profusely – now he would have to have a word with that damn brat who had nothing better to do than stick his nose into other people's contracts! Also, considering Jones's impressive record of fuck-ups in terms of his past contracts, he doubted that the American would have crossed the line with his contractor – even an Englishman – in any other way than he usually did (in which case it was very likely Lukas had seriously misinterpreted what he'd seen...)

"I'll take care of it. But now come here, it's time to show you what you've been missing," he said eventually, beckoning the Norwegian with two fingers.

Lukas was gripped by panic again, not really fearing pain but simply at the thought that *it was finally going to happen*, the very thing he'd been dreading for the past week. On top of that, he was cold and awkward, wishing he could at least put a shirt on. He flinched when the Dane stood from the armchair and came to sit on the bed, eyes widening slightly as he took in the sight of the man from up close. If he was completely honest, Mathias Kohler was far from foul looking, quite the opposite actually, but there was something feral about him, something dangerous even when he spoke gently.

"Come here," the Grim repeated, patting his own lap briefly.

Lukas moved slowly but instantly, no longer with a mind to disobey considering that he'd escaped so cheaply until now, even if he was still hesitant and biting his bottom lip nervously. The other's closeness was beyond uncomfortable and he surely wasn't used to climbing onto strangers' laps either. Still, he had no choice and his hands rested shyly on Mathias's shoulders for support and he nearly flinched upon noticing the other blond's sudden, sharp-toothed grin. "Relax," the Dane whispered, one hand descending determinedly between their bodies and popping the button of his contractor's jeans open.

"N-No! What-?!" the Norwegian protested, but Mathias was quick to catch the hand trying to push his away and held it firmly behind Lukas's back. Then he tilted the pale blond's chin up and to the side, exposing his bare throat. His thumb brushed against the pale, soft skin, briefly feeling the quickened pulse underneath.

"Don't worry, getting you a little hot and bothered will help your blood flow faster, that's all. No need to get overexcited about it," he chuckled.

The Grim's teeth sunk into Lukas's skin in the same time as his fingers slipped into the front of his jeans, fondling lightly through the light fabric of his boxers. The sorcerer gasped at the quick, sharp pain, and the sting only grew in intensity when blood began to be sucked from the wound. Still, it wasn't unbearable and it was largely countered by the sensation of Mathias's fingers touching him just right. His stress-weakened body reacted right away,

hardening against the other's hand and making his jeans feel uncomfortably tight. His hips bucked helplessly against the Grim's fingers, trying to create more friction and escape the torturously slow rhythm inflicted on him most likely on purpose, a soft, frustrated moan escaping his lips as his free hand fisted in the short hairs on the Dane's nape.

*As if*, Mathias thought, grinning inwardly. Unlike other Grims, he'd never rendered this sort of 'services' to his contractors and he surely wasn't planning on starting now, not with this little troll. Certainly, there was an undeniable satisfaction to see someone with a charming gift – because yes, a Grim was aware of all of their contractor's magic skills and attributes – made to moan and beg while being helplessly dominated by one on which their amazing gift did not work, so toying with Lukas Bondevik a little bit couldn't hurt. But this was all there was to it and he withdrew his hand without warning, despite the fingers now pulling roughly at his hair, and drank just a little more of the nourishing liquid he'd been so deprived of, until the other's pulse slowed and a fainting spell was close.

Carefully, Mathias pulled away, swiping the last drops of blood with his tongue before the wound was closed and laid the smaller blond back on the bed, this time tucking him in.

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"Why isn't there any coffee in this house?! Like, I gotta go to Starbucks every morning to get my fill! How am I supposed to function like that?" Alfred complained, plopping on the sofa in what passed as the living-room and barely missing a loose spring. On the other side of the cracked coffee table, the green-eyed Englishman was nursing a cup of black tea and to say that he was pissed would have been a crass understatement.

"This is not *a house*," he replied grimly. "And you're dead, so technically you shouldn't be functioning at all, with or without coffee. Now stop bugging me!"

*Pffft*, *people never change*, Mathias concluded with a sigh, leaning against the doorway as he observed the two. Jones was still the same fucking pain in the ass as always... "Alfred Jones," he called out loud, making the pair jump in surprise and turn towards him.

"Yo, Kohler!" the American greeted, then threw his hands up in exasperation. "About time you got off that lazy ass of yours, man! What, letting me do all the work around here? No wonder your contractor pulled that nasty stunt on you-"

"Where's Lukas?! What have you done to him?!" Arthur cut in, jumping to his feet with his fists clenched at his sides.

"He's fine, just needs a bit of rest. And it looks like you haven't read the book either," Mathias observed dryly. "As for you, Jones, this is your fault, you thought I wouldn't find out? You told my contractor shit about me!"

"Oh, come on, man, you weren't ever here! *That much* you bothered with this contract!" the American countered.

“I wasn’t here because unlike you I tend to respect my contractors’ privacy when my presence isn’t necessary, instead of sticking around and trolling people with shit. But now the trolling is over, and you two will tell me exactly what kind of mess you’ve gotten yourselves into.”

***To be continued***

# Chapter 10

## CHAPTER 9

A/N – Hello everyone and HAPPY NEW YEAR! Wish you all the best! I must say I'm so excited to bring you this new chap – first thing I've written in 2018 because I've finally managed to put together a chapter plan for this fic and I actually know where things are going! Oh, and for my fav reader – here's some more HongIce in today's update, because I've got some plans for them... Enjoy!

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He should just get a job and move out, Emil thought, fingers clenching around the strap of his schoolbag as he walked briskly, the usual scowl plastered on his face. Get the fuck out of this, live on his own, get the fuck away from all this magic bullshit. Seriously now, he loved Lukas and Tino, but they both were unreliable *a.f.*! *Bror* hadn't called in two weeks (and like hell Emil would call first!) and now Tino had managed to disappear so effectively that not even his bloodsucking ghost slash watchdog slash fuck buddy couldn't find him! Very responsible too, leaving him with the grumpy (and most likely hungry too) Swede who simply lingered around the house emitting bad vibes! Fuck, if he just got away from 'underworld' and all the shit it entailed, he could finally live a normal life like all non-magic people, without this stupid secrecy at every step, he could have normal friends, have fun, maybe even fall in-

Emil was not two blocks away from their place, making his way home hurriedly among the garbage-filled containers and the few randomly parked trailers, when suddenly a black shadow descended from somewhere above, blocking his path. Startled, the boy yelped and jerked back instinctively, tripping on his own feet and landing painfully on his backside.

"Ah, forgive me... I did not mean to startle you," a smooth voice said and a pale hand, adorned with a galaxy of silver rings reached out, taking the blond's and helping him back up.

The Iclander scowled some more and squinted momentarily, shaking his bangs out of his face, then his irritation turned brusquely to the deepest horror as he was met again with those unnatural eyes which shone like liquid, melted gold. No, no, this wasn't possible, it just couldn't, not in broad daylight! Yet the vampire stood there, wrapped in his long black overcoat like a bat and watching him intently, his hand still holding Emil's captive, his perfect lips on the brink of stretching into a grin.

"I don't believe we've been properly introduced last time," the Asian said, "I am Leon, from the House of Majerus. May I have the pleasure of knowing your name?"

*Like fuck!* Emil yanked his hand free and took a few steps back (still fully aware that he couldn't outrun the other). "I don't give a fuck about who you are! I know exactly *what* you

are!” he snapped angrily. “What are you doing back here?! And I thought you weren’t supposed to touch me!”

“*I wasn’t supposed,*” Leon snickered openly, advancing towards his prey. “Who said that?”

“Berwald... a-and the... other vampire!” the pale blond stuttered, drawing backwards even more, until his back met the wall of one of the containers.

“Well, they might have said that,” the vampire agreed, reaching out and resting one hand on the wall next to Emil’s head, trapping him. Damn, when had he moved so fast?! “But then again neither the big bad Grim nor my annoying boss are here now, are they? You’re all alone... and there’s no escape,” he teased.

Emil blinked and drew out a shaky breath, realizing that he was doomed. He couldn’t summon Berwald and without magic he was defenseless on his own. So... this was it. He’d never get away, everything was going to end right here.

“So you’ve come back to kill me,” he concluded grimly, barely holding back tears of frustration at the absurdness of it all. “Well, come on, what’re you waiting for?!”

Leon’s eyes widened in surprise for a moment and he looked almost hurt by the other’s words, then his expression softened. “No! No, don’t say that! My interest in you is nothing but genuine!” he stated emphatically, pressing a hand on his chest.

“What interest?! I’m not even a sorcerer! And besides, what *interest* could you possibly have in someone other than to drink their blood?!”

“It doesn’t matter in the least! And you are mistaken, I do have a heart, it might not beat anymore, but it has throbbed at the sight of you!”

Emil cringed, this had to be the worst thing ever. He fleetingly thought of a biting remark in reply, maybe something Twilight related, but in the end he could only say “P-Please... I-I don’t want to die...” almost inaudibly as his shoulders sagged in defeat.

The brunet sighed softly and pressed closer, taking the Iclander’s hands in his and bringing the small knuckles to his lips. “Believe me when I say, I want you like I’ve never wanted anything or anyone else ever before! Now, let’s get out of this miserable place...”

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Leon was beautiful. Beautiful in that blatantly, absurdly unfair to the rest of the word way of only those to whom beauty served to mask the otherwise immeasurable darkness of their being. And Emil could only stare, now feeling as if in a trance, beyond all dread. Something had happened in the meantime – probably a spell was at work numbing his mind because he couldn’t tell where they were and how he’d gotten here in the first place. It was a lavishly decorated booth in a fancy, oriental café of sorts, with low, fluffy cushions for seats and dimmed purplish lights and he only snapped out of the weird state with a flinch when the vampire told him he could order anything he liked.



The pale blond reached out numbly and picked up the menu while Leon pressed a button on the velvet-covered table, then his eyes widened more and more as he flipped the glossy pages – there were all sorts of coffee, tea and desserts on offer, but the prices – in underworld money - were absolutely outrageous. A waitress appeared from under a heavy drape and the boy's finger rested randomly onto an iced coffee with cream and some other stuff he couldn't really focus on to decipher.

“Are you going to kill her too when she brings the bill?” Emil asked, sinking back into the soft fabric of his seat when the girl was gone.

The brunet smiled lightly, shifting closer to him and his long fingers ghosted over the side of the boy's face, ever-so-gently. His amber eyes were taking in Emil's every feature with an avid, peculiar sort of curiosity which reminded him of a cat. It was hella uncomfortable, so the Icelandic let his eyes wander over Leon's impressive collection of silver jewelry – the numerous rings, some with colorful stones, others with intricate patterns, the studs glinting through the raven wisps of hair and the chains hanging around his neck, complimenting the full black of his garments.

“So... how old are you?” Emil asked next, randomly reaching out to touch a skull-shaped pendant with rubies for eyes. It looked really sinister... and symbolic.

“To someone like me age has no meaning, only time,” the vampire replied pensively, with a sigh. “We do not get any older, forever frozen in the stale time of our long past youth, but time... time is merciless still, because it takes away everything else...”

He paused when the girl returned with Emil's drink and offered her a quick, charming smile as two golden coins were placed into her hand. The waitress smiled sheepishly in return (very obviously ogling Leon), and the other frowned, reaching out for the iced coffee with an annoyed huff. Fortunately, she didn't linger and the coffee tasted nothing short of delicious, improving his mood a little bit.

“And what's with all the bling?”

The Asian grinned, busying himself with tucking a strand of icy blond hair behind Emil's ear. “Do you like it?”

“Pffft... it's tacky,” the teen replied, rolling his eyes and taking a long sip of his drink. “And isn't silver supposed to burn you or something?”

“Yes, but that's the thing. My master's spells protect me, so all this silver on me shows how powerful he is. Hell, this would be enough to scorch me,” Leon laughed, wiggling his adorned fingers before stretching an arm and lightly wrapping it around the younger's shoulders.

He was smug and clearly proud of his privileges and it instantly rubbed Emil the wrong way. His face darkened visibly and despite the growing haze plaguing his mind, old issues resurfaced. *Bestemoor's* disapproving looks, her wicked insinuations that he wasn't worth the food she was putting on the table when Lukas wasn't around, always feeling like he was being left out by his brother and cousin and now this! This Leon guy was just after a quick

meal and had poured all that syrupy bullshit (which by the way was seriously lame beyond imagination!), otherwise someone like him would have never ever spared a single glance to someone like Emil. To some plain, boring, helpless *non-magic human*.

“Do you think it’s lame? That I have no magic abilities?” he heard himself asking, eyes widening slightly as he looked straight into the vampire’s, almost pleadingly.

Leon blinked, pulling away slightly as he took a sharp, unnecessary intake of air, surprised. “No! No, of course not!”

“Yeah, right...” the Icelandic snorted bitterly, turning his head. What answer had he really expected?

“Emil, I’m the *slave* of a sorcerer,” Leon said, suddenly dead serious. “And these are my shackles!” he pointed, tugging at the jewels around his neck. “I am not allowed to take them off! At the slightest disobedience, my master would use them to torture me!” His eyes seemed to burn with a secret pain when they bore into awed purple and Emil reached out involuntary to touch his face and run shy fingers through that luscious black hair which was soft like the finest silk, oblivious to the cold seeping from the other’s unnatural body.

“Then why... why do you serve him? Can’t you run away or something?”

The brunet leaned in with a sigh, resting his forehead against the boy’s. “No....”

And then, suddenly, his lips were on Emil’s, soft and cool, pressing and nipping with infinite tenderness, before his tongue slipped into the pale blond’s mouth without hesitation. The teen barely registered the vampire’s hand shooting out with keen precision, catching the glass which had slipped from his damp fingers and replacing it on the table. Then, Leon’s body pressed against his small frame and his hands were everywhere, exploring his torso, his arms and shoulders, enveloping him with a strange sort of affection he didn’t know he’d been missing until now. Now, in this precious, wonderful, forbidden, accursed moment when everything else disappeared and there was nothing but Leon’s icy breath mingling with his, Leon’s kiss – avid and sharp and burning with passion - and his touch, shameless and greedy and still gentle and loving.

Emil moaned softly and let his head fall back as the vampire’s lips eventually left his and trailed down across his cheek and along his jaw line and he felt fingers hastily unbuttoning the stiff collar of his school uniform. Leon’s cold nose nuzzled his exposed throat, inhaling the appetizing scent of the teen’s skin as his arms wrapped tightly around the Icelandic’s frame, to prevent escape. A satisfied sigh, almost a moan escaped the brunet’s lips before he eventually sunk his fangs into the tender skin of his new lover’s neck.

A surge of unexpected pleasure shot through Emil’s trembling body instead of the sharp pain he’d anticipated, eliciting a small yelp of surprise and his fingers fisted impatiently in the vampire’s raven hair, pulling him closer. “Yes... take me... L-Leon,” he whispered, eyes closing as he abandoned himself to the newfound bliss.

He didn’t even notice when the Asian finally pulled away and observed the boy in his arms pensively for a moment, his sated hunger now replaced by an entirely different sort of

excitement. Because he'd felt more than the addictive aroma of youth in Emil's blood, a tiny, deeply concealed... *spark of magic*. Buried. Still slumbering. He licked the last drops of blood from his lips and the twin puncture wounds, grinning, then ran his fingers affectionately through the teen's icy blonde bangs, brushing them away from the pale forehead.

"Awaken," Leon murmured, pressing a gentle kiss onto Emil's cheek.

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Lukas woke up with a start, finally escaping the clutches of a nondescript bad dream, and flinched instinctively upon seeing a figure sitting on the edge of his bed. But it was only Arthur, and his boss offered him a glass of milk.

"Drink this, you need it," the Englishman grumbled, his bushy eyebrows furrowed in what could have been mistaken for concern, but Lukas knew the man was pissed and was really going to let his assistant have it this time.

The pale blond sat up slowly and sipped on the milk, grateful for the attention even if he would have preferred a cup of hot, strong coffee instead. Arthur had always taken care of him, even in the beginning when the Norwegian had been as skittish as a stray cat, and that made everything so much worse now. He'd betrayed his coworker's trust – no, his *friend's* trust – he'd just fucked up monumentally and the thought of it made him so ashamed that he couldn't look Arthur in the eye.

"I want to punch you so hard in that pretty face of yours right now!" Arthur stated. "How could you not tell me the truth?!"

"I thought it didn't work! The... the summoning and all... And he wasn't here! You saw yourself that he wasn't-... I thought the contract was useless," Lukas mumbled weakly, proceeding to bury his face in his hands. "I'm so sorry that you ended up with Jones-"

"Fuck Jones, we have bigger problems right now."

"Like what?"

"Like our debts, for example! And since there's nothing else I can think of right now, I need *you* to get us the money to pay Allistor and the vampire prince and whatever other shit we might need to solve this case," the green-eyed blond concluded, pursing his mouth.

Lukas blinked. "What?! Do you want me to-"

"Yep, just like in the good old days, I give you my blessing. Go out hunting tonight, I'll make sure you're covered and no one up the ladder finds out about it. Yeah, mate?"

The Norwegian nodded slowly and, as he dropped back on the pillows, a small smile tugged at the corners of his mouth. The good old days had surely been hella fun and after what

Kohler had had the nerve to do to him (or to not do, as it was) it was surely going to feel good having someone completely wrapped around his finger again.

***To be continued***

A/N: Bestemoor - Grandmother

# Chapter 11

## CHAPTER 10

A/N 1 – Hello my dear readers! I’m finally back with a new chap of this fic which I always seem to neglect, starting other shit... But I’m sticking to it, this plot is just too good to drop! Also, thank you guys so much for all the support, it means the world to me! All that being said, enjoy today’s update ;)

A/N 2 - Please be advised that this chap contains minor references to the sequel fic, *Blackmarked*, but they’re rather irrelevant, so don’t worry. Long story short Francis and Sadiq are associates in a tobacco company and Antonio is their lawyer, but that’s not important at all. Just bear in mind that they’re bad guys and they deserve what’s coming ;)

*Sadiq Adnan - Turkey*

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“So let’s get one thing straight,” Matthias said with a sigh. “You *don’t* have a plan. You have no idea how to go after this Pellemargarothe fellow, you still pretty much don’t know where to find him and you don’t know how dangerous he is. Right?”

“Actually, that one we do know,” the Englishman pointed, ignoring the elbow Alfred had shoved in his ribs. “He uses the automatons for everything – the Arena fights, guarding his club and himself probably – so I think it’s safe to assume they’re the best thing he’s got. But that’s bad enough, since the one time we faced them we couldn’t... uh... crack them. I’d thought I’d wrecked one with a particular spell, got its iron entrails all messed up, but just when I’d thought it was done for, lying on the ground, it got up again to attack. We barely escaped with our lives that night and Lukas was injured badly.”

At this point the Norwegian walked into the room, still feeling rather worn after the previous night, a cup of freshly brewed (and fairy dust spiked) coffee nestled between his palms. He saw that Arthur had started early, with a glass of JD no less. The pale blond took a deep breath, settling onto the battered couch next to his boss and wishing away the intense awkwardness caused by his Grim’s presence. Mathias was sat on the other side of the coffee table, looking perfectly relaxed and casual, as if he hadn’t so cruelly toyed with his emotions (*and* his body...) only a few hours before and Lukas just couldn’t get himself to lift his gaze to meet his.

Instead, he reached for the opened pack of cigarettes lying on the table, lighting one quickly with a preoccupied air, also trying to ignore Alfred’s forearms resting on top of the backrest just near his head. Unfortunately, the American was quick to sense his discomfort and decided not to miss the opportunity, poking his shoulder with one finger.

“Hey!”

“What?” he asked dryly.

“Looks like you got away real cheap last night, mister. Didn’t get what you were rightfully deserving, did you?” Alfred whispered confidentially with a smirk and shook his head.

In reply Lukas only rolled his eyes and blew the smoke right in the Grim’s nose.

“I’m not entirely surprised,” Mathias was replying the other sorcerer’s question. “Even if their bodies are made of cogwheels and seem to run on an apparent mechanism, it’s their master’s magic energy keeping them ‘alive’. My guess is they’d need to be in utter pieces to stop functioning. Or, of course, if their master dies.”

Arthur sighed. “I sort of figured that out too. That’s why our best shot is to... well, the thing is we can’t, you know, arrest him or something. He’s much too dangerous and in these cases we have green light to... dispose of the culprit. Not that I’ve done this before or I’d be comfortable with doing it, but innocent, non-magic people have already started dying because of the shit he’s been selling at that pub. So we have no choice, you see.”

The Dane nodded, before feeling something like a faint jolt of electricity down his spine. He scowled, gaze trailing to his contractor, who was observing him intently, dull midnight-blue eyes unreadable but oddly focused. Mathias bit his upper lip, instantly suspecting foul play. Still, he wasn’t exactly mad – the young sorcerer was also probably ignorant enough to not know that most spells could not affect a Grim, so whatever he was up to was doomed to fail. Well, let him learn the hard way.

“So you need to find him first,” he stated, ignoring the little troll’s stare.

“We do, but information is expensive,” Arthur agreed, taking a sip of his whiskey. “That’s why we’ll need to fix the little *budget* issued first. And pay our creditors...”

What do you know, everyone was up to their neck in debts these days, Mathias pondered with a grimace. He had yet to solve the matter of Luca Majerus’s fee.

The American snorted. “Good luck with that, red coat... Do you have any ideas?”

“As a matter of fact, we do.”

Scowling involuntarily, Lukas wasn’t paying attention to what his boss was saying. Instead, he was perplexed by his Grim’s lack of expected reaction to his charming spell. At first it had had no particular purpose, having been meant solely as a little payback for earlier when Kohler hadn’t let him finish, but now he was getting frustrated. How could it not work?! It always worked! That dumbstruck – pardon, *lovestruck* – expression never failed to appear on people’s faces the moment he had uttered the words in his mind, but now, even if Kohler had given him an odd look for a second, it was rather intrigued if anything, so something was clearly amiss this time.

*What the fuck...?*

Maybe this was another quirk the Grims had. Still, how annoying!

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Going out hunting again was a special occasion and hell, he would make the most of it. The Norwegian opened his dresser and examined his clothes thoughtfully. He had used to enjoy dressing up, but that had sort of gone down the drain with the new, low-budget job. Not that he had ever needed fancy clothes to impress, but still. Oh, fuck this, he'd go shopping first thing when they were going to be back in the money!

Lukas picked a simple, white dress shirt to throw on top of a tight black undershirt and rolled the sleeves up to give it a casual air, and his usual skinny black jeans which fit just right. This would do. On his way out of the room the pale blond stopped briefly to examine his hair in the stained, frameless wall mirror and suddenly a rather violent sort of tingle crossed his stomach, nearly making him double over. It was over quickly though, a strange flutter replacing it. It was a sensation akin to excitement, anticipation, but unexplainable, although Lukas had a dark suspicion it had something to do with Kohler and his stupid antics. Scowling, he decided to ignore it in favor of more important things.

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“Still, *amigo*, tax evasion is a pretty serious charge,” the green-eyed brunet observed, his usual cheery attitude missing tonight. “We won’t be able to wiggle out of this one so easily...”

“Relax *mon ami*, it can’t be that bad. We’ll begin by blaming everything on Beilschmidt, Edelstein & Karpussi. They’re the accountancy firm and Mr. Karpussi was personally in charge with all the custom tax returns Turkish-French Tobacco Exports has ever submitted since its set-up, two years ago. Who understands those complicated forms anyway?” Francis replied casually, emptying his wine glass. “Besides, they must have professional insurance so at least a portion of the fine will be covered...” he chuckled, standing from the plushy armchair. “Another round?”

Sadiq motioned with his glass and shook his head. “I think I’ll try a cognac this time.”

Lukas had spotted the trio almost as soon as he’d plopped onto a bar stool and had let his gaze wander around the relatively small but extremely chic pub. Their designer suits, expensive watches, the refined diamond studs the youngest was wearing – a Spaniard judging by his loud voice and accent - and the numerous golden rings adorning the fingers of the bearded brunet with a dangerous air, they all clearly spelled ‘worth the trouble’ and his mind was made up. Now he knew that all he had to do was wait.

The blond Frenchman the others had called Francis sauntered towards the bar, glass in hand and flicking a long golden strand away from his forehead and the Norwegian turned his head slightly, his slender fingers twirling his empty Vodka shot. The other halted his movements brusquely, order forgotten as he slipped numbly into a seat nearby and pretended (in a very obvious manner) to ignore him. Well, they were all trying to preserve their dignity at first...

Lukas dug into the back pocket of his skinny jeans and pulled out the pack of cigarettes, proceeding to fish one out with his teeth. With the corner of his eye he saw the other blond staring openly now and could almost hear the Frenchman's heartbeat fastening and blood starting to go south. The weird flutter he'd felt in his stomach earlier returned with a sudden rush of exhilaration which almost made it into a genuinely excited smile, making the corners of his mouth twitch. Damn, after Kohler's absolutely frustrating lack of reaction, the confirmation of his power felt incredibly good, so good that it was almost... arousing.

"I do not believe it..."

All the sudden the Frenchman was next to him, a charming smile on his face as he offered a light with an elegant flick of his wrist.

The sorcerer leaned in briefly towards the golden lighter, then took his time with a drag and blowing out the smoke with a sigh before replying. "What is it that you don't believe?" he asked smoothly, usual coldness gone from his voice as he graced his prey-to-be with a half-lidded glance of his midnight-blue eyes.

"*Mais*, that someone as gorgeous as you is all alone at this hour. *Je suis desole*, but I couldn't possibly allow it!"

Yeah, Lukas could bet on it.

"What about your friends over there? You plan to abandon them?" the Norwegian asked innocently with a motion of his head towards the other two, who were now chatting quietly, hunched close together. They weren't going to know what hit them.

Francis glanced towards them uncertain, probably inwardly debating whether to share his newly found treasure or not, and chewed on his bottom lip. "How would you like to join us for a drink, *cheri*? I'm buying," he said eventually, his reluctance evident.

The sorcerer shrugged indifferently. "Hmmm... why not? As long as it's Vodka."

He slid slowly off his seat and the Frenchman's arm sneaked around his waist smoothly as the man turned to the bartender and gave his order. He was guided to the small table and introductions were made, after which Lukas stabbed the blue-eyed blond in the heart by slipping into Sadiq's lap as if it were the most natural thing in the world. Now, this would have probably ruined the game for someone less 'gifted' and made them look crudely professional, but a mere glance had been enough to get all three men so hooked that nothing mattered at this point.

The interrupted conversation continued for a while, if only for appearances' sake, because Lukas knew that they all had only one thing on their mind by now. But he felt weird this time, Sadiq cologne was intoxicating for some reason, making him feel a tad lightheaded and the warm, olive-skinned hand resting on his thigh... he found himself imagining it was Kohler's.

*No. No. NO! What the fuck?!*



Something was wrong. This wasn't natural, not for him. The reverse side of Lukas's all-powerful charming gift was that in turn nobody ever managed to as much as arouse a vague interest, let alone catch his fancy. Desire was almost unknown to him and when he saw it in other people's eyes, it just made them look helpless and rather dumb. Sure, bodily needs were a fact but sex just wasn't worth the trouble of going through the required human interaction. Back in uni he'd tried it a couple of times with girls, but the experience had been painfully disappointing every single time.

The three men were undeniably handsome, each in his own way, but the Norwegian couldn't say he liked any of them in particular. In fact, he was quite sure he didn't like them at all, felt nothing towards their persons, but for some unexpected and completely twisted reason their touch felt good. The idea of being touched was appealing. The thought of just letting go and enjoying whatever they desired to do to him crossed his mind and he panicked.

The pale blond closed his eyes, taking a deep breath followed by a sip of Vodka. Damn it, he'd always known that being up to stuff like this on his own was dangerous, but never for this reason. Maybe he should have asked Arthur to come with him? Everything would have been easier... No, mission be damned, Arthur would have probably lost his temper and ripped the Frenchman's head off... and the Spaniard's, probably. Better get this over with already.

His lips found their way to the shell of the Turk's ear, hot and moist, and whispered in the most sensual tone a mortal had ever been graced to hear. "Let's get out of here."

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Some people just knew how to make you feel them, Lukas concluded, a loud, shameless moan escaping his lips when his back hit the elevator wall and Francis attacked his throat, all but ripping the white shirt open and his fingers dug helplessly into Antonio's arm, pulling him closer while Sadiq was already on his knees, more or less successfully struggling to open the sorcerer's belt buckle. His body was on the brink of catching fire. His free hand fisted into the Frenchman's long hair and yanked his head upwards, bringing his mouth on his own, and when that eager tongue slipped into his mouth, his mind went blank.

***To be continued***

**A/N – You think they got lucky, don't you? Ha.**

# Chapter 12

## CHAPTER 11

A/N 1– Hello everyone! I know – this update is late (what else is new.) BUT, since I'm finally back with a new chap, time to spice things up with some more SuFin, while our favorite troll is busy doing VERY bad things :)))))) That being said, enjoy! Also, yes, the rating goes up beginning with this chap, also I should have probably done it since I first brought on the violence... oh well, my bad.

A/N 2 – One of my readers on AO3 pointed out that Berwald actually uses more vowels than I gave him until now and for that I deeply apologize! Thank you again for this insightful feedback and yeah, will do ;)

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The temporary spell Tino had cast was finally beginning to fade and, as the barrier between the two of them dissolved, pain suddenly began to invade Berwald's body. It was so bad that it almost felt like being run over by a truck and the Grim staggered, resting his hand against the doorframe as his body cowered and his face scrunched in torment.

The low groan escaping his lips finally drew Emil's attention, making the teen flinch slightly in his spot in front of the TV and turn towards the man questioningly. He'd grown jumpy as of late, ever since he'd met Leon and had started having a... *thing* with the guy, something he had mixed feelings about, because the vampire was both ravishingly charming and perplexingly dumb at times, his mouth was able to do incredible things to Emil's body and yet utter the most enormous stupidities with mind-numbing nonchalance. Still, it would have been a lie to say he wasn't genuinely thrilled when Leon was sneaking into his room at night, slipping through the cracks of his window frame, in a way no human ever could. And well, this had not been a problem while Tino was away, because the Swedish Grim was oblivious *af* (or so Emil had been led to believe), but his cousin was probably going to find out and make a fuss... *and tell Lukas*. His stomach churned at the very thought of it. Not that he wasn't worried about Tino and didn't want him back safe and sound though.

"What's going on?" he asked cautiously.

"I'm gonna go get T'no back," Berwald replied darkly, straightening his back with a pained grimace. "Go pr'pare his bed, b'cause I think he's in bad shape... But don't wait up."

---

Berwald hated the dungeons under the Arena. They were stirring some bad memories from the dust of his accursed, centuries-old existence and they were just as real, if not more horrible, the last place he would have wanted to find his current contractor. The Swede was aware that this forbidden attachment was also part of his punishment, because eventually

Tino would die, of natural causes at best, and in the end he could do nothing to prevent it. Sure, Berwald would die with him too, as their contract was terminated upon the contractor's death, but then again Berwald had died many times before. As it was, for him it would probably never be a permanent thing as long as the Book of Grims existed in this world, but Tino would be lost to him forever. The most he could hope for was for the Finn to have a good life, for as long as it lasted, but sadly he knew that sorcerers seldom had a good life.

A lycan guard led Berwald into a remote cell away from the main corridor, into a separate area into the bowels of the Arena where injured fighters were taken to be given treatment and recover. This place was even darker than the rest, there were barely any air shafts and only small, flickering oil lamps illuminated the individual 'rooms'. The lycan silently pointed to one of them and left the Grim to his own devices.

In the middle of the cell there was a bath tub filled with reddish colored water and melting ice cubes and Tino was lying in it apparently unconscious, head thrown back over the edge and arms hanging out. His shirt was gone and the Swede saw that there were no marks of the usual temporary protection runes he had used on his body, but instead plenty of bruises, scrapes and cuts which two slave girls were currently doing their best to clean with washcloths.

"How's he?"

The girls said nothing, but one of them held up a bottle of liquor, three quarters empty.

"Bring me s'me more clean w'ter and anoth'r washcloth," the Grim ordered and waved them off, drawing closer and leaning over his contractor. His fingers ghosted shyly over the Finn's forehead, brushing away the damp strands of hair, causing Tino to groan and crack his eyes open.

"So you f-found me..." he breathed out, words slurred badly.

"'m sorry-"

Tino nodded slowly and snorted, making a weak attempt to sit up fully in the bathtub, hands clenching on the edges. "You-... 're s-sorry....pfffft. Fuck you and your friend, Majerus!"

Berwald did not even flinch at the insult, but the expression on his face was ominous as he waited patiently for the girls to bring the requested items and then close the grated door behind them.

"Y-You're furious, I know... You went h-hungry, no? Come on, drink me d-dry... I don't... I don't give a fuck!"

The Swede remained silent, calmly pulling the black cloth drape over the door and then rolling up his sleeves. He proceeded to haul Tino from the bathtub, ignoring the other's attempts to push him away and the string of slurred swears and to lay him down on the rough leather mattress placed directly on the floor. Kneeling, he picked up the washcloth, dipped it in clean water and began to clean the smaller blond, starting with his neck and going down to his torso, carefully tending to each cut and scrape, despite the Finn's continued attempts at

keeping his hands away. Fortunately the wounds were mostly shallow, even if they'd bled plenty and had made the water gruesomely red. When all that glaring blood was gone from Tino's milky white skin, Berwald fished a mini-wand out of his pocket and began to draw some quick-healing and pain-numbing runes across the younger's torso.

"Stop this!" the sorcerer shouted coarsely, pushing his hand away with a scowl. "What the fuck...! I know y-you want, jus' do it! I know-"

Berwald sighed and leaned in, cupping Tino's cheek and tentatively brushing his mouth against the other's pale, chapped lips. In reply Tino jerked away and slapped him hard across the face, sending his glasses askew.

"You s'rcerers are such a pain in th' ass..." the Swede grumbled, sitting back on his heels and taking the glasses off. Then his arm shot forward abruptly and his fingers mercilessly gripped his contractor's jaw.

The Finn let out a muffled cry when this time the Grim attacked his mouth much more brutally, sharp teeth digging into his lips hard enough to draw blood. Rough hands moved to explore the soft expanse of his bare skin and the Grim growled into the kiss, stirred by the enticing taste of the precious liquid he'd been deprived of. Tino's fingers pulled helplessly at his short-cropped hair and dug into the broad shoulders, still when after just a moment the taller blond reached down to pull the soaked trousers down, he obediently lifted his hips and allowed them to be slid all the way off his legs.

Eventually, Berwald's mouth left the sorcerer's and instead moved to his exposed throat, while his hand lightly gripped Tino's shaft and he stroked his thumb along the side of it, eliciting a low, sensual moan. The Finn's protests ceased entirely and he threw his head back, especially when the Grim went lower and flicked his tongue over a hard nipple before trying his teeth on it.

"I always wanted t-to do it h-here..."

"You've 'lways been shameless," the Swede observed bluntly, reaching down and pressing his palms flat on the Finn's slender thighs, pushing them apart. He pushed his own knees between the other's legs and dipped his fingers into the warm lamp oil, taking a moment to admire Tino's body sprawled out nude and ready for the taking. Eventually, his mouth found his contractor's delicate and oh-so-tasty neck again and his sharp teeth bit into the hot skin as into a ripe fruit just as the Grim thrust himself in, utterly ignoring the quick jab of pain which made Tino cry out.

Pleasure took him, dark and sinful with each movement as he settled into a rough rhythm of thrusts and drank greedily, one hand reaching between their bodies and closing around his lover's shaft again. The rough pumps were quick to coax out the sounds he so loved to hear and slender hips moved up to meet his hand until the body under him tensed, arching off the mattress. Tino reached his peak with a loud moan which melted into a sigh and Berwald finally allowed himself to gather him in his arms and hold him gently, pressing a soft peck on the tip of the Finn's nose.

"C'me on, let's go home".

---

Berwald stepped into the kitchen and wrapped his arms around his contractor's waist from behind, pressing a quick kiss to the smaller blond's nape, causing Tino to chuckle softly as he stirred the frying pan. Now, all cleaned up and dressed in his usual comfy and pristine clothes, the petite sorcerer looked like a totally different person, someone far more innocent at any rate, the Grim thought.

"It's good th't Emil didn't see you last n'ght," he said, slipping into one of the chairs and resting his elbows casually on the table. "Did you make any m'ney, at least?"

The Finn nodded, his grin widening as he took the frying pan off the stove and brought it to the table to fill the breakfast plates. "Oh, I forgot to tell you, but I met Anri Majerus back there. Gorgeous girl and what do you know, it turned out she prefers the *fearsome Reaper* over her creepy teen husband."

Berwald choked and nearly sputtered his coffee, but in the next moment Emil walked into the kitchen, hair ruffled up and eyes still heavy with sleep, so he only sighed and discreetly pinched the bridge of his nose, adjusting his glasses.

"Who's Anri Majerus?" Emil asked, gracing them both with a questioning glance and the Grim threw Tino a 'you did it this time' look.

"Someone from *work*," his cousin replied nonchalantly, eyes trained on the Swede. "So, what's up with you?"

"With me?"

"Yeah, I couldn't help noticing that the usual gloom and doom is gone, like... no more bad vibes," Tino explained, turning to get his own cup of coffee.

"He's h'ppy," Berwald supplied neutrally, making a cold shudder run down the teen's spine as he sat down slowly and stared at his plate, gripped by sudden panic.

"But Majerus is that sorcerer who sent his servants after you, isn't he?" Emil asked quickly, hoping to divert the attention from himself. "Are you still in trouble with him?"

"Pffft, no," Tino said. "Why do you ask? Did anything happen while I was away?"

"No!" the younger cousin replied quickly, shaking his head.

"Yes," Berwald stated casually, proceeding to sip from his cup.

---

Panting hard, Lukas lifted his head from the sink and ran a trembling hand through the wet strands falling over his forehead, examining himself in the mirror. Cheeks flushed and eyes reddened from crying, fuck, he'd never been such a fucking mess, never! And if it hadn't

been for the large ceiling mirror placed above the king-size bed where the three men were now lying unconscious, sleeping the blissful sleep of the ignorant, his dignity would have finally gone down the drain tonight.

Thankfully, getting to actually *see* himself sprawled out on the mattress, nearly unclothed and relentlessly touched all over had made him snap out of the accursed daze he'd fallen prey to and put a quick end to it with the sleeping spell, but it had done nothing to alleviate the pure shock of realizing that he'd - for the first time - let it go that far. And it had done nothing for the fire scorching his body and making his knees weak, such that he could only roll off the bed as quick as he could and stumble into the bathroom, seeking the relief of the ice-cold water jet while tears had begun running down his face. Just what the hell had Kohler done to him?! Maybe it was something in the runes on his back? Or the Grim had cast a spell as he was touching him? Damn, he'd been really foolish to think the Viking had let him off the hook so easily...

As he'd feared though, the cold water didn't help and right now he didn't even trust the strength of the sleeping spell enough to take his time jumping into the shower for a further attempt to cool off. It was a given that the men would wake up remembering nothing of the past couple of hours, but if they were to wake up and find him still there the whole procedure would have to be repeated and... complicated.

Turning off the tap and removing himself from the offensive sight the mirror offered, the sorcerer leaned with his back against the locked door, eyes closing as he threw his head back and his hand descended determinedly into his already unbuttoned jeans. His whole body jolted at the touch of cold fingers upon the rock-hard flesh and the other hand flew to his mouth, clamping tightly and nails digging into his smooth cheek. It didn't last long – the previous extended *foreplay* torment enough, since his bewitched imagination had rendered every touch to his body to be the Dane's and that obnoxious, sharp-toothed smile to hover above his helplessly wanton form. The thought of *desiring* to be dominated by the Grim was so infuriating that it made him grit his teeth and huff angrily through the nose when all he wanted was to mindlessly moan Kohler's name as the pleasure began to coil in the pit of his stomach. But aside from being painfully humiliating, that could have also resulted into an unwanted summoning of said person – which right now would have been the worst thing ever!

“Fuck!”

Once he was done, clean and composed once more, the Norwegian returned to the room and paused for a moment, sighing deeply as he observed the three slumbering forms piled together on the bed in almost comical positions. The flamboyant blond had even started to snore lightly.

“Fuck!” he swore again. “Well, if I'm made to feel like a slut, I might as well charge the hell out of *somebody*...”

Fifteen minutes later all of his loot had been collected in a briefcase he'd emptied of papers and Lukas walked out of the hotel room, carefully closing the door and hanging the 'do not disturb' sign on the knob.

***To be continued***

A/N – okay so now Emil is in trouble too (what was he thinking? XD) and don't worry, Lukas is about to get what he deserves too soon enough ;)

# Chapter 13

## CHAPTER 12

A/N 1– Hello my dear readers! So yeah, a month or so later I'm back with a new chap. That's pretty much it, I have no inspiration for tedious author notes this time (thank God!), so enjoy ;)

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“Well, I guess that should do it,” Arthur concluded, pausing to down what was left in his whiskey glass. “With what we have so far we should be able to at least cover our current debts.”

A conclusion Lukas was less than pleased with, though. After taking what they could of the stolen credit cards, the two Rolex watches, the pair of diamond studs and the various golden jewelry, they'd split the money into what they owed Allistor for the stolen Book of Grims, Arthur's debt to the vampire prince and Kohler's debt to Luca Majerus as outstanding 'contractor retrieval fee', leaving the Norwegian with basically zilch for his own personal budget, to say nothing of Magic Crime Department's future expenses.

“Yeah... it looks like I'll have to do this again sometime soon,” he grumbled, taking a long drag from his cigarette. At least he'd managed to refresh his supply of fairy dust before being eased of all his loot, and damn he was going to need it! Because aside from the obvious reason for chagrin he still felt quite weird, if not more so. Sort of... *horny*. How ridiculous! “So what now?”

The Englishman sighed, scratching his head. “Well, now I guess I'll have to go and appease Allistor with this and he should bloody be happy with the little 'interest' we added too, and I'm counting on you to go see the prince and give him what we owe him.” He snorted, noticing Lukas's questioning glance. “I mean, *I* could go, of course, but what if he kisses me again? Jones will go through the roof...” he chuckled, eyeing the American who just muttered something about how debauched everyone around here was.

---

Maybe this was a good opportunity to get to the bottom of what was going on, Lukas decided. The vampire prince had spent centuries studying magic and was probably going to be pleased enough with their offering to at least give him an explanation, if not a solution. No need to waste any more time, since it was already close to midnight he was going to see the prince right away.

Kohler, who had spent the better part of the day in the living room, dedicating himself to the disturbing hobby of sharpening his battle axe to perfection, decided to accompany him this time, smoothly expressing hope that tonight his contractor wasn't 'working' again (the



bastard!). This only added to the Norwegian's bad humor and the two of them walked in complete silence all the way to the creepy neighborhood in which the vampire prince Alin apparently lived.

At the address Arthur had indicated they found a large Victorian house which had definitely seen much better days, the front yard covered in dried grass and shrubbery, through which a dirty brick path winded all the way to the double wooden doors. The brown paint was peeling off badly around the brass ornaments, giving them a thoroughly decrepit air and up above them the small decorative window was broken and ivy vines tangled in and out of the cracks. None of the tall, gothic windows were lit, seemingly blinded with thick curtains on the inside and there was no other light visible aside from the dirty lamp hanging above the entrance on a rusty chain.

This was just like in one of those cheap horror movies, the sorcerer thought as they walked up to the door and, before he could get to ring the doorbell, it swung open brusquely, revealing a black-clothed figure. The man, with sleek black hair perfectly parted in the middle, came out on the first step, allowing the yellow glow on the lamp to show his unnaturally pale complexion and dark green eyes. He wore a simple, austere suit which gave him a stiff, unpleasant air, despite his youthful and rather handsome face.

"What do you want?" asked the brunet, both his tone and expression reflecting a nearly hostile boredom and indifference.

Lukas suddenly remembered his boss's account of the Arena incident, where the prince's temperamental Bulgarian servant – probably this one, judging by his accent and the fact that their informant didn't keep a lot of staff - had mindlessly thrown Arthur over the railing just to make a point. Maybe it was good that Kohler had tagged along after all...

"I'm here to bring your master his due payment, on behalf of Arthur Kirkland," the sorcerer replied, lifting the small wooden chest he was carrying demonstratively. "I believe he was expecting us?"

Still, the other's scowl didn't ease one bit. "Like hell he's expecting *you*. Give me that," the Bulgarian prompted.

He motioned for the chest, but Lukas took a step back, holding it just out of his reach. "I don't think so!" he retorted. Feeling confident and safe with the Grim by his side, he nearly had a mind to take out his increasingly bad mood on this loathsome character. "We'll see your master right now or we walk away and he'll hear of this! Yeah?"

"Come this way..."

They were led into a dark hallway lit dimly by dripping candles which were casting sinister shadows onto the chipping walls and the spider webs draped in the corners. The air was stale and musty-smelling, as if the windows hadn't been opened in a very long time. As they were walking, Mathias leaned next to his contractor's ear, chuckling softly. "You have some really cool friends, *master* Lukas," he whispered, snorting when the Norwegian tensed and scowled.

The vampire servant walked stiffly in front of them, the sound of his footsteps muffled by the nondescript, half-rotten rug, up to a tall door which he opened slowly, with a dramatic flick of his wrist. It was an antique-looking drawing room, where the prince was currently lying with his legs up in a fancy baroque loveseat covered in black silk and scrolling on his phone in the dim light of the few candles scattered around.

“Who died here?” Lukas blurted out, genuinely struck by just how sinister the place looked. And one could have hardly expected it, seeing how Alin was – with only few exceptions – usually favoring modern clothes and technology. Even now he was wearing a loose, heavy metal-themed t-shirt and a pair of torn jeans and the smart-phone was probably the last generation, but yeah, sorcerers be sorcerers and modern furniture, light bulbs and TVs were just off-limits for some unfathomable reason.

“Good question,” the prince observed, lowering his legs and lazily smoothing his clothes. “However this shit house is very old and Tsvetan managed to lose the papers, so I’m afraid I can’t help you with that information. Aside from the random fact that *sans* papers we basically live here illegally,” he added, throwing a quick glance to his butler, who was hovering in the doorway. “So... you wanted to see me?”

“Yeah. Yeah, we’ve got the money Arthur Kirkland owed you for your help. Um... with a little interest,” the pale blond said, opening the lid of the chest demonstratively.

The vampire’s eyes widened comically and in the next second he bounced off the seat with lighting speed, popping up in front of Lukas. “Ahhh!” he exclaimed, grinning happily as he ran his long, thin and black-nailed fingers through the golden coins on display. “Lukas, I love you!” Alin purred dramatically, clasp his hands to his chest before snatching the treasure from the other’s hands.

“Hey!” the Bulgarian intervened angrily. “How do you even know his name?! And don’t you dare-”

“I know his name because I can read minds, dumbass! *We* can read minds, remember? Why the hell are we even having this discussion?!”

*‘Can I speak to you in private?’* the sorcerer thought, hoping Alin could hear him. *‘I need your help with something and I don’t want the two of them to hear’*

Alin tilted his head curiously for a moment, then shrugged. *‘Sure’* “Hey, I wanna show Lukas my beer cap collection, so will you please excuse us!” he stated suddenly.

“But you don’t even have a-”

“Fuck off!” the prince cut off the Bulgarian, moving with that same inhuman speed to slam the door in the outraged face of his butler.

Mathias, who had stayed behind in the hallway with his hands stuffed in his pockets, snorted amused. He’d surely gotten involved with a funny bunch this time, not that he hadn’t seen his fair share of the magic world in the past centuries. Still, contractors kept managing to surprise him every now and then (not necessarily in a good way) and Lukas Bondevik was one of

those ‘special’ ones. Right now, he had a strong suspicion that the young sorcerer was unsightly trying to conceal whatever other shit he must have had done and he didn’t want his Grim to know about. As if Mathias couldn’t ‘shake’ the truth out of him if he wanted....

Indeed, he could feel his contractor’s physical pain, in fact any unpleasant sensation (like the one he was feeling now in the pit of his stomach, like a dull burn) but then again he’d had a couple of female contractors in the past and had been through pretty much everything, including period pains and childbirth. *Eight* childbirths, to be precise and he’d begged for death every single time, too. So Mathias was tough when it came to pain.

“Why is he doing this to me?!” the Bulgarian wailed, burying his face in his hands.

“He’s like a pestering parent!” the prince huffed on the other side of the door, before returning to Lukas’s side. “So, what seems to be the problem?”

Lukas bit his lip, throwing a quick glance over his shoulder at the closed door. The Dane could probably hear him, he must have been able to hear the faintest of whispers... “Um.... I think... I think *someone*’s done something to me,” he explained at last, motioning with his head to the door. “Because I feel weird, I feel-...”

Alin drew closer and placed his hand lightly on the blond’s chest, and Lukas nearly flinched at how cold it was, the chill seeping in through his clothes. “How long have you been like this?”

“Uh, almost... three days now.”

The vampire sighed, shuffling his feet. “Well, I have some good news and some bad news. The good news is that no one has done anything to you, but the bad news...” *‘the bad news is that you used your charming gift on someone who is not alive and because of that it backfired big time.’*

“Fuck...” the Norwegian breathed, the horror of the situation dawning on him. “But are you sure?! I mean, I tried to... take care of it, but it didn’t work!”

“It doesn’t work that way, didn’t you know? You must either wait for the effects to pass, which might take a while, or-”

“How long will they last?”

“A lot longer than they usually do,” Alin replied with a grimace. “You know, you’ve done it this time. There’s nothing worse for a sorcerer than to fall prey to his own magic. But then there’s the solution-”

“NO!” Lukas shook his head. “No fucking way! Seriously, no fucking way!”

“Why, is it so bad? Who was it?”

The Norwegian motioned with his head to the door again.

“Yeah, I’m afraid... uh, that you can’t take care of it. *Mister* has to take care of it,” the prince concluded and winked.

---

Back at the headquarters, Lukas marched straight to his room and slammed the door shut in his wake. Fuck his life, this was very bad news! Damn it, just how had he been supposed to know that his gift was not to be used on ‘*someone who was not alive*’? And it made no sense anyway, why wouldn’t it work?! And it wasn’t just the lust, it was this burning in his stomach, not acute but enough to cause a permanent discomfort and probably the Grim could feel it too! Shit, what was he-

“So, what did you do this time?”

Suddenly, Kohler was standing behind him, arms crossed as he was leaning against the bare wall. Both his voice and composure were calm, but it was an ominous sort of calm. And he already suspected foul play...

The sorcerer turned on his heels, scowling. Okay, he’d done something wrong, but it had been only because he’d been provoked, it was the Dane’s fault just as much as it was his. “I don’t know what you mean, I haven’t done anything!” And before the other could open his mouth in reply, he snapped. “You’re just pissed that I got more loot in one night than you ever got on your pathetic raids!”

Mathias blinked and his eyebrows shot up, clearly having not seen this one coming. For few moments he was completely silent and motionless, making his contractor wonder whether initiating this ‘Viking talk’ had not by any chance been a very bad idea. “Well, I don’t know if it is so or not, but at least I never got laid for money, that’s for sure.”

The Norwegian’s eyes widened and his jaw hung open in sheer indignation. “*WHAT?!*”

“Well, you do have a charming gift, after all,” the Dane shrugged innocently.

*Fuck!* Lukas bit his lip, fruitlessly looking for a sharp comeback, but it wasn’t like what he was doing wasn’t wrong *af*. “I just pretend to be... *available* to draw people in, but then I just knock them out and I rob them,” he muttered averting his gaze. “And they don’t remember anything afterwards.”

The Grim nodded slowly and peeled himself away from the wall, drawing closer. “Great! Now that we got that out of the way, tell me what you are up to this time, because I feel really weird and I’d like to know what’s going on,” he asked in that same even tone. Unfortunately, he was standing too close now and Lukas sat down on the bed gingerly, feeling that his legs were about to give out any moment now.

“I just... It’s nothing! Just a spell gone a little wrong,” the pale blond lied. “It’ll wear off in no time, really!”

Mathias sighed. No easy way to do this, was it? He leaned over and gripped his contractor's jaw lightly between his fingers, tilting his head up. "Yeah?"

"I can't tell you," Lukas blurted out, gulping. The Dane's fingers against his skin were too much, his eyes were too bright, too blue, the sound of his voice too alluring despite promising trouble.

"You can and you will."

The sorcerer cringed, squeezing his eyes shut and fists clenching at his sides. "I-It was an accident..." he stuttered, almost inaudibly. "I, uh... used my charming gift on-on you by mistake, but I didn't mean to, I swear! A-And it b-backfired..." He bowed his head, waiting for something really bad to happen, but instead silence stretched between them for several moments, poisonous.

And then, suddenly, Kohler burst into laughter.

"That's a good one," he observed, pinching the younger's cheek lightly. "Serves you right, too." And with that he pulled away and left the room, while Lukas collapsed limply on the bed, his hand reaching absently for the phial of fairy dust hidden under his pillow.

***To be continued***

**A/N – okay, I know what you're thinking right now - what the hell? But patience is a virtue. :)))))))))))))**

# Chapter 14

## CHAPTER 13

A/N – Hello everyone! I hope you're all well and haven't completely lost your patience with this ;))) Anyway, yeah, real life is eating up a lot of my time and my muses just don't come when I call them. They come when *they* want and give me whatever they see fit. Let's hope it's good this time, so enjoy the new chap ;)

---

"I really didn't think you'd be able to get all my money so soon," the Luxembourger observed in a conversational tone, over the soft clinging of coins.

Mathias had his back turned on the sorcerer, eyes trained on the peaceful little square visible from the study window. He couldn't watch the other counting the money he'd brought, the expression on the teen's face was enough to make him sick, so he remained with his hands stuffed limply in his pockets as he absently observed the rare passers by outside. The Grim didn't know what exactly about Luca Majerus disgusted him so – after all, he'd seen much worse in his time – maybe it was the thought of a heart already so rotten dwelling inside someone so short of years.

"My contractor got it," he replied, shrugging.

There was a pause in the other's clinging and Mathias instantly suspected that he'd given the wrong reply.

"Yeah? And what does your contractor do?"

"Why do you ask?" The Dane turned at last, meeting the boy's inquisitive turquoise gaze. Furthermore, had he aroused some unwanted interest by delivering the whole sum in one go? But then if he hadn't, Majerus might have charged some delay penalties, the last thing Mathias needed. Now he could only hope he could fend off whatever shit the other had coming his way.

Luca snorted, resuming his counting. "I've seen him, you know? Your contractor, he's so *pretty*... He's a prostitute, isn't he? One of those expensive ones?"

*Oh. So he'd only meant to offend me, not that he nailed it, really...* Mathias chewed on his bottom lip, fighting back the sudden impulse of asking whether Mrs. Majerus wasn't by any chance interested in his contractor, seeing how she was in the habit of paying men for the excitement she wasn't getting at home. Although the dainty Norwegian probably wasn't her type, the rough fighters down at the Arena being the sort she rather favored. No, better not delve into that topic and stir someone with the blind malice of a child.

“As you know, Grims really don’t care what it is their contractors do, as long as their terms are met. And I’ve served worse.”

The sorcerer snickered. “Well, yes, I see your angle here. But still, you know, as long as he doesn’t somehow make you to put in some ‘work’ yourself...”

*Alright, maybe that topic is worth delving into after all.* “Actually, there’s some good money to be made down at the Arena, one just has to win a couple of fights,” the Dane stated with a small smile. “And most clients are women, so I don’t see a problem with that. You’d be surprised to know *who* I’ve seen down there in the dungeons.”

And they left it at that, Majerus being quick to steer the conversation away from a subject he clearly didn’t want opened.

---

The museum basement slash awful dungeon holding the Magic Crime Department offices was unusually dark and quiet, even if Mathias could clearly sense the presence of his contractor within the walls. Jones and the Englishman were off somewhere for now, he noted, strolling down the corridor, his ear barely able to pick up any sounds. He wasn’t feeling any better, in fact things had gotten worse – a dull headache stubbornly persisted under his brow, the burn in his stomach lingered on the verge of nausea and a cold sweat was making his dress shirt stick unpleasantly onto his back. Damn, now that the settlement with Majerus was finally out of the way, it was time to take care of *this other issue* somehow.

A desolate sight met the Dane’s eyes upon cracking the door open and peeking into his sorcerer’s bedroom. It was dark, except for the few strips of streetlamp light pouring in through the window near the ceiling and Lukas was sprawled up onto the mattress, face down, next to a crumpled pack of cigarettes and a small, empty glass phial. He wasn’t sleeping though, because his breathing was shaky and irregular and he seemed to be trembling too. It almost looked like he was going through some really bad withdrawal symptoms.

Sighing, Mathias walked into the room and reached up to open the window, letting some fresh air in for a change.

“You don’t look too well...” he pointed, leaning over the other’s pathetic form and brushing a few damp strands from his face. “Is that how the charming gift is supposed to work? Because to me it feels like a bad flu or something.”

“No... just...” Lukas groaned, rolling on his side with some difficulty and proceeding to curl into a tight ball. “... just... you want s-someone. B-but this is...” he paused and sniffed. “L-Like a punishment.”

The Grim snorted. “So let me get this straight, if this had worked instead of backfiring, I would have... *longed* for you? And you thought I’d what, sit on my ass and shed bitter tears over my unrequited desire?”

The Norwegian didn't reply.

"You know, normally a contractor wears their protection charms at all times, except for when the Grim demands their payment, but ever since I showed up you've just stopped wearing them. So basically it's like you're permanently offering yourself to me."

*Oh hell.* Lukas hadn't considered that. But what good did the charms do if he was supposed to take them off at some point anyway? And that was why the whole contract thing was dangerous, in *those moments* the Grim could do some really nasty things to him aside from feeding! But whatever, perhaps it was a manner of limiting damage or some etiquette thing he'd missed when reading the book (seeing how he'd missed other important things too...).

"I don't..." he muttered, gritting his teeth. "... it's because I... trust you." *Bullshit.*

"Bullshit!" the Dane snorting, plopping down and making the bed creak loudly. "Anyway, this is really bad. Like a stupid sensation which just wouldn't let off," he said, not that Lukas needed to be told what it fucking felt like. "Did you try to... take care of it or something?"

"I did, it doesn't work," the pale blond grumbled, helplessly pressing the heels of his palms into his eye sockets. Damn, really not a topic he wanted to discuss with the Grim right now.

Kohler sighed deeply, shifting behind him. "Would my hand work then?" he inquired, stretching over his contractor's curled body to grab the empty phial and examine it.

"Not your hand," Lukas replied without thinking. The other being so close had been bad enough, but now that he was touching him, pressing against him (and he was heavy, too!) the discomfort was amplified tenfold. He groaned, trying to roll over and push the Dane's weight off him.

"What then?" The taller blond finally sat back on his heels, the fairy dust phial held carefully between his thumb and index finger as he looked at it in the light. "How the hell does this work, anyway? Do I have to say I love you? Pop the question? Or do we just have to fuck?"

The sorcerer let out a groan, forcing himself to sit up for a change. The vampire prince had been right – he'd done it this time, he'd fucked up and the Grim would not let him off the hook so easily. If he were honest, well, the man wasn't exactly one of those evil Grims the Book spoke of, but now Lukas had probably managed to push him in that direction and he had it coming too.

"That is out of the question!" he mumbled. "I can't-... I don't know what you think, but I'm not into-... I've never slept with a man, what the hell!"

"Well, I never slept with a man either, nor with any of my contractors to date," Kohler countered, a hint of offense in his tone. "And it's kind of unfair to make it sound like I'm the brutal savage here when you're the sorcerer in the first place and you're constantly doing and getting yourself into all sorts of shit!"

The stern phrasing and the undeniable truth of it made Lukas lower his gaze and bow his head, scowl fading into a pained grimace. *Well, that's it, I'm not a good person. I've never*



*been. I keep telling myself that I have an excuse for everything I do, but I don't, really. I must have bad blood after all.* And now he wanted to cry.

Mathias chewed on his bottom lip, still processing the surprise of having actually managed to take the king of trolls on a guilt trip. Because the other looked like it right now, his mask had cracked even more than the previous times Mathias had seen him frightened. It was the sad, vulnerable image of someone who just wasn't very good at handling things in general, he thought, weighing the empty phial in the palm of his hand. Fairy dust – what one took when they wanted to forget everything and grow numb, completely insensitive. What a mess...

“Take your clothes off.”

“*WHAT?!* No, I said-”

But Lukas's protest was cut short when the Grim leaned forward brusquely, gripped his chin and pressed his mouth against his. It was awkward, clumsy and rough, clearly something the Dane wasn't awfully comfortable with, but the spell rendered him unable to do anything else but kiss back hungrily, desperately, hands reaching to find purchase in the front of the other's dress shirt and try to pull him closer. And it felt so good, damn, but Kohler pulled away after just a moment, scowling.

“See?! You want this, spell or no spell!”

“But you don't!”

“Well I don't want *this fucking job* at all, if you must know! I never wanted it!”

Suddenly, the pale blond remembered the gruesome scene when the witch had carved out Kohler's still beating heart out of his chest and his stomach cringed further. “I can't, I just... I heard it's painful! And I don't suppose you'd bottom...”

The expression on the Grim's face confirmed his supposition. “I'll put some temporary runes on your body so that everything goes smoothly and it doesn't hurt. Last thing I need right now is to give myself a pain in the ass too, on top of everything else!”

“Wha... you mean with the knife?!”

Kohler rolled his eyes. “I never used the knife! Just my nails. Let's just get this over with before Jones comes back, okay? I could do without him knowing about this.”

Lukas took a deep breath and closed his eyes. *Do it. Just do it, get it over with, how bad can it be?* Every movement took an incredible effort now, just the talk had exhausted him. Eventually, he moved away and slipped under the duvet with a huff, then proceeded to pull off his t-shirt, sweatpants and underwear, all the while remaining perfectly hidden from view.

“Just get under the covers, I don't want to be stared at,” he grumbled, throwing an arm over his eyes. And if he had to endure this mortifying experience, it was better not to see anything either.

There was a rustle of fabric and a body shifting closer, then a hand found its way onto his stomach, groping blindly. Still, the fingers moved across his skin ever-so-gently, down to his lower belly, where they grazed a clear pattern of sorts. Once completed, the rune ‘burned’ there for a split second, enough to make him flinch and tense further, despite the growing excitement of the teasing touch. Then the fingers moved lower, following the line of his hip, eventually reaching his inner thigh. The burn came again, but it only added to the growing heat pooling towards his lower body and by the time the Grim finished drawing the runes, he was rock hard.

“Relax,” the Dane told him with a sigh, shifting on top of him and settling between his legs. Soft, bare skin brushed and pressed against the insides of his thighs, and Lukas bit back a moan.

Then a finger prodded him, pushing in, exploring his insides and stretching, then another. It didn’t hurt, but it was weird as hell. What the fuck. Enduring the procedure and not attempting to wiggle out of it took a substantial restraining effort, but the sorcerer only bit his lip harder and remained quiet. ‘Okay... Thor’s cock...’ he heard the other muttering under his breath as the fingers finally withdrew and a tensed pause followed.

“Relax,” Kohler repeated, even softer, and ran his hand reassuringly down the smaller blond’s torso and stomach, before lifting his knees and guiding one of his legs over his own hip.

Lukas didn’t even know when his arm had moved away from his face, when his fingers had gripped the sheets or when he’d thrown his head back into the pillow, his back arching off the mattress and hips lifting to meet the other’s body. He could only try to breathe through the feeling of his body being currently invaded by something which was just *too much*.

“Huh,” the Grim observed, sounding rather intrigued. “Are you alright?”

“...y-yes. Just-...” There was something else too, lingering on the thin line between weird and pleasurable.

The Dane moved, very slow and cautious at first, pulling out and then thrusting back in, groaning softly and with the motion that feeling returned – definitely good now – and Lukas gasped loudly, rolling his hips upwards. After that, the rhythm picked up and his grunts and moans spilled freely as pleasure shot up his spine and began to build in his lower belly.

Still, it wasn’t *quite* enough, he needed more and with a sense of urgency. “C-Could you... touch me?” the sorcerer whispered between pants. He already knew what the Grim’s hand was capable of and could only hope to be indulged. And Kohler did, his large, warm hand slipping between their bodies and wrapping around his painfully hard shaft.

“Fuck yes! F-Fuck-... Haa-ahhh, *God!*”

“It’s ‘Mathias’, but thank you.”

---

Okay, so this hadn't been half bad, the Grim concluded, staring at the dark ceiling above and chewing absently on his thumb. He'd kicked the duvet off and now the sweat was rapidly cooling on his bare body, but it was a pleasant feeling, now that the spell had been broken and that awful sensation in his stomach was finally gone. *Wrong, but not bad at all.* Granted, his contractor was not a girl, but his body was soft, lean and delicate, that lovely blond hair falling in his face and his flushed cheeks sure were cute and... he was damn tight. Not to mention the shameless way he'd moaned Mathias's name right at the end, all dignity out the window. That would have sent any man over the edge.

And it was also strange, because Bondevik was clearly quite awkward and inexperienced in bed, with all of his charming gift. *Oh fuck, I really hope this wasn't his first time or something...* Biting his bottom lip, the Grim shifted on his side and discovered Lukas – who had remained tucked under the covers - studying his nudity in a rather obvious manner.

"I thought we weren't going to stare," Mathias pointed, propping himself up on one elbow and cocking his eyebrow questioningly. Still, he made no move to cover any of his naked glory.

The sorcerer rolled his eyes. "You're shameless," he stated dryly.

"Me? Pffff..." Mathias sighed, shaking his head. "Anyway, this didn't happen, okay?" *It shouldn't have happened, damn it.* "Not a word about this to anyone, I'm serious."

"Ugh, as if I'd tell anyone..." the pale blond grumbled, pulling the covers up to his nose in indignation and looking away. "What's the deal with Jones, anyway?"

"Jones has kind of a bad reputation among us, he's fucked up a couple of contracts in the past... and from what I've heard all of his contractors too. I don't want him to hear of this and get to think we're on the same level or something now."

Oh fuck, more 'good' news. Lukas had a vague suspicion of what 'fucking up a contract' could have meant, but right now he didn't even feel like asking. Besides, now the Grim probably needed to feed, as payment for this one 'little favor'. Taking a deep breath, he turned again towards the naked man, who seemed expectant.

"Would you like to... drink my blood now?"

Kohler grinned, shifting closer. "Yes, but first, can I fuck you again?"

The Norwegian's eyes widened and his mouth opened silently for a second. "Yes." *No! I meant 'no', fuck me!*

"Yes, daddy'," Mathias corrected him amused, pressing the tip of the other's nose with his finger.

***To be continued***

# Chapter 15

## CHAPTER 14

A/N – Hello my dear readers! Yes, it is still me, but I’ve changed my penname - LillyofFire. This year something wonderful happened in terms of self-improvement and I’m a new person, I feel different and I needed to make some changes. Don’t worry though, I still write the same twisted shit as always and I’m so grateful to you guys for all the support! That being said, enjoy the new chap!

---

There was a scowl on the Dane’s face as he sat on a corner of one of the shabby living-room couches, scrolling through his phone. Jones and his contractor had returned and he could feel a curious (if not suspicious) vibe from the other Grim, something he was rather willing to avoid. Bondevik wasn’t up yet, but he anticipated a newly-occurred awkwardness between them that would make the American figure out that *something* had transpired the night before, namely some juicy gossip material. But that was just some shit he’d eventually have to put up with, because as much as he would have wanted, this stuff never stayed under wraps for too long. He’d made a stupid mistake breaking his own rules and bedding his contractor and now he’d face the consequences.

“So Kohler, what have you been up to yesterday? Didn’t see you around here,” Alfred said casually and apparently without hidden intent as he came and plopped on the opposite couch. “I thought you were planning to stick with your contractor from now on?”

Mathias sighed. “I do plan it. But yesterday I went to Majerus to pay him the remaining amount due and get this shit out of the way once and for all.”

“Huh. I guess he was happy about it, no?”

“I don’t know if he was happy, he still had that face like he’d swallowed a toad,” the Dane shrugged. “And of course, he had to point out that he hadn’t thought I’d be able to pay after all and then went and suggested the money was ill gotten. Frankly he kinda pissed me off, but whatever...”

“Oh man, that kid’s a fucking troll,” Alfred stated, spreading his arms along the backrest. “Like, what the fuck is his problem? I mean, he has *everything*!”

Mathias offered a disgusted grimace in reply. “Yeah.... His wife is cheating on him though,” he added, deciding to give the other something to chew on and distract his attention. “First time I was there she kinda hit on me.” At least that was true.

“Really?” Sure enough, the other Grim perked up. “And... you did what?”

“Nothing, what do you think! I wouldn’t fucking mess with *his* wife, would I? Besides, she’s fine but she’s not my type.”

Alfred snorted. “What type is that?”

“The desperate type. So, how did you fare with debt settlement?”

The American rolled his eyes and let out an exasperated sigh. “Man, I thought red coat here,” he said, motioning with his head towards the kitchenette where Arthur was making tea. “Was the worst thing ever. And then I met his brothers. Like, there’s *more* of them, Jesus Christ... But I think we’ve appeased the vultures for now.”

Right in that moment, as Lukas finally woke up in his bedroom across the corridor, Mathias became painfully aware of his second mistake. Namely that the night before it had completely slipped his mind that the temporary runes were just that, *temporary*, and he’d gotten a bit carried away... As a result, now his contractor (and Mathias himself, obviously) felt like he’d been run over by a truck, or at least the lower half of his body. Fuck, what if he couldn’t even get out of bed?

*Oh, fuck me!* the Dane thought, hand inadvertently flying up to cover his mouth as he wracked his brain for a solution and found none. He simply couldn’t do anything under Alfred’s nose and, to make things worse, the Englishman walked in next, holding two mugs of black tea.

“Where’s Lukas?” he asked. Obviously.

“Um...”

“Has he been mixing Vodka with fairy dust again?” Arthur inquired, throwing the Viking a quizzical glance.

“Uh... maybe?” Mathias shrugged, trying to look indifferent despite the fact that beads of sweat were gathering on his hair line and the discomfort in his lower back was making it hard not to squirm at this point. Still, it was not the pain itself – for he was quite resilient – as the mixture of pain and fear of discovery that was truly dreadful.

“Oh, what the hell!” the green-eyed sorcerer grumbled. “We have work to do!” He set the mugs down and plopped on the couch, irritably pushing the American aside to make room.

“Oh, by the way, guess what,” Alfred said, “We finally have a plan. There’s some real action coming up, aside from getting seriously annoyed with random characters from the local magic underworld.”

Mathias blinked, pulled from his dark thoughts. “...yeah?”

“Yes,” Arthur confirmed, with a grave air. “My superiors have given us clearance to kill the master of the automatons, this Pellemargaroth fellow. It’s not like we can arrest him – even if we did manage to do so, it would be unlikely that he can be safely contained as it is - and bodies of innocent young people have been piling up thanks to his accursed pub. So I’m

afraid there's no other way, however uncomfortable I am at the thought of hunting someone down in this fashion."

Some fifteen minutes later, during which various suspicious noises reached the Dane's ears, Lukas finally showed up in the living-room, a sour expression plastered on his face. Actually, 'sour' was an understatement.

"The washing machine is fucked," he stated through gritted teeth, not looking at his Grim as he sauntered slowly towards the couch and sat down gingerly next to him, proceeding to clutch his head in his hands. Mathias noticed that his usual skinny jeans and dress shirt had been replaced by soft baggy sweat pants and a cotton t-shirt and his damp hair was cutely ruffled. He also smelled nicely of soap and the Dane was suddenly reminded how-... *No, seriously fucking stop it right now!*

"Hey... are you okay?" Arthur asked his subordinate, pushing one of the black tea mugs towards him.

"Yeah, just... my head is pounding," the Norwegian lied, still clutching at his head as he grabbed the tea and fought back a grimace. Great fucking day to be out of coffee. "It really hurts like hell..." And it did.

"Maybe you should stop drinking," Alfred pointed, raising his eyebrows, while Arthur nodded in agreement.

"Maybe *you* should get a fucking Facebook account and troll there to your heart's content," Lukas snapped, throwing him a glare as he took a sip of the tea. "And this is *spiked*, thank you very much!" he added, pointing to the mug a moment later with a scowl directed at his boss.

Mathias leaned over, took the mug from his hand and sniffed it. There was whiskey in it alright.

Arthur cleared his throat, fidgeting and looking uncomfortable. "Anyway, as I was saying, in this moment we have our work cut out for us. We're going after the master of the automatons. We're going back at the pub, since that's where he lives, we take out his bloody *toys* and we kill him."

Lukas turned his head brusquely and stared at his Grim with an expression of sheer, absolute horror. His already pale face had gone white as a sheet and it almost looked like he couldn't breathe. It only lasted for a few moments though, after which he seemed to gather himself and let out a deep breath.

"...when?"

"Tonight," the Englishman replied, biting his bottom lip and looking quite uneasy about it as well. "Yeah, mate?"

Lukas nodded slowly. "O-Okay." In the next second he sprung from his place and made a beeline for the bathroom, where he proceeded to slam the door and kneel over the toilet.

“Oh, wow...” the American Grim remarked sarcastically.

“He got slashed at with a *meat cleaver* last time, you asshat! Fuck, am I eager to see *you* in action with that shitty musket of yours!”

“It’s a very good musket! It was my grandfather’s, you stupid red coat!”

“That’s my point *exactly*! Why the fuck do you have a mobile with internet if you’re fighting with a musket?! *PEOPLE DON’T USE BLOODY MUSKETS ANYMORE!*”

Mathias stood in turn and walked away from the bickering pair, already feeling a headache brewing and deciding to deal with his own contractor for the present time. He met the Norwegian just as he was getting out of the bathroom, his face wet but still awfully pale.

“We need to talk,” the Dane said.

“No, we really don’t,” the pale blond murmured, trying to brush past him without even meeting his gaze, but the Grim caught his wrist and held him in place.

“Yes, we do. Arthur told me what happened to you the other time, but I want to say there’s nothing to be scared of this time. I *will* protect you, okay? That’s why I’m here. You *can* trust my fighting abilities, if nothing else.”

Lukas sighed, leaning against the wall and running a hand through his hair. “I don’t know... You’ve never seen those-.. those *things*! But you’ve seen the scar on my back! How can I be sure they won’t just hack you to pieces with their blades?! Hack both of us in fact!”

“Well, because others have tried it before and it doesn’t work. It *can*’t work, since my body isn’t actually real. Technically there’s nothing to hack to pieces.”

“Your body isn’t real. That’s a good one.” Lukas deadpanned, rolling his eyes. “I had a very different impression...”

Mathias sighed. “Yeah... look, about that-”

“Just don’t. I know what you’re going to say and anyway now you think I’m a slut and-” Fuck, he still wasn’t wearing his protection charms...

“Well, you did break the Viking law – a Viking never bottoms,” the Dane pointed. “However, seeing how I’m the service provider in this contract, I guess that makes me a slut too.” *One just has to be the ultimate slut to go to bed with the Virgin King of Trolls!* “But I don’t have a problem with anyone being a slut, really! It’s okay!”

The smaller blond just buried his face in his hands.

“Anyway, that’s not what I wanted to say. I know we had a problem to solve but, um... I did break my own rule and I did go about it the wrong way, kind of. I enjoyed myself a tad too much, got carried away and disregarded the fact that it was your first time. I hurt you and I’m sorry, okay? Allow me to fix this right away.” Mathias grabbed the Norwegian’s shoulders

and turned him around against the wall, lifting his shirt to quickly draw some more runes on the small of his back. “Not that you didn’t have it coming though,” he added.

“Yes *daddy*... Hashtag noforeplay,” Lukas grumbled under his breath.

The Grim scowled, but pretended he hadn’t heard that. *Someone* was looking for trouble.

“Okay, now let’s get you something to eat, you’ll get sick if you don’t eat more after I’ve fed on you. Come on!” He dragged Lukas along the dark corridor and into the kitchenette, which was currently empty and sat him down on one of the bar stools. Arthur and Alfred were still arguing in the living-room. “Just stay here, okay?”

The Norwegian chewed on his bottom lip, resting his elbows on the countertop as he watched the taller blond vanishing into thin air. He scrubbed a hand over his face, sighing – right, better to focus on the upcoming mission than on... *anything else*, really. He’d study for the rest of the day and blatantly ignore the fact that he’d basically reached a new all time low in terms of self esteem as well as the nagging detail of having actually enjoyed sleeping with Kohler. At least the Dane didn’t know he had the blood of a necromancer, there was *nothing worse* than a necromancer in the magic world – the witch who had created the Grims had been a necromancer herself and aside from cursing Kohler’s soul for all eternity, Hell knew what she’d done with his body after killing him.

“There! Dig in.”

Before he knew it, the Dane was back with a box of takeout food which happened to smell just deliciously. He also pushed a steaming paper cup of latte from Starbucks under the sorcerer’s nose. Lukas blinked, staring wide-eyed at the offerings and his hands reaching automatically for the coffee. He peeled off the lid and took a large gulp of the sweet, rich, creamy liquid – ohhhh, it was Heaven! A smile broke on his face instantly as he licked the cream ‘moustache’ off his upper lip.

“Thank you,” he murmured, a bit shyly. “But... you went to Starbucks for me?”

“To Starbucks no,” Mathias replied and grinned widely. “Jones did,” he clarified with a shrug.

“Wha-.. You took *his* coffee?!”

“I’m a Viking. That’s what Vikings do, we take other people’s stuff.”

Oh well, Lukas couldn’t say he had a problem with that. He smiled again, a bit wider this time.

***To be continued***

Okay, so this chapter really wasn’t much aside from everyone arguing, but drama will hit the ‘screen’ in the next one, so brace yourselves ;)

**Reviews and comments are LOVE ;)**





# Chapter 16

## CHAPTER 15

A/N – Hello everyone! Aaaaand another month has passed, because *someone* is starting too much shit... What else is new. Still, I'm finally back with a new chap and damn it's time to UP THE DRAMA because things were settling into this fluffy, homely routine and it just won't do. Enjoy ;)

---

The pub was relatively small, but animated. Just the chic, modern and affordable type of place to attract youth, despite the antique-looking plaque hanging above the front door, with now illegible letters. 'Skull *something*', it said. Inside there was only one room, large enough to host a bar in the back and several small tables with plush stools scattered around, the open space made surprisingly cozy and private by the dim lighting and the little colorful lamps placed on each table which gave more shadows than light. Almost all of the tables were taken and there were several people at the bar too, the sound of lively chat drowning the background music.

"Oh fuck," Arthur sighed. "There are so many people... We need to wait until the place clears out somewhat or it might get ugly. I really wouldn't want to see those infernal devices running around with blades drawn..."

The four of them made their way inside and managed to find a secluded table near the restroom doors. Mathias picked up the menu lying under the table lamp and skimmed through the cocktail offer, but nothing looked remotely familiar. Still, the other patrons didn't seem to have a problem with that, being probably awed by the fancy 'magic-sounding' names and expressly looking to be surprised.

"But why the hell would he even be here? He wasn't here last time," Lukas asked in a low voice, leaning forward on his elbows to be closer to his boss. "The guard at the Arena said that this guy barely shows up *anywhere*! He's hiding for some reason and-"

"He may not be here, but we found out the hard way that the automatons are," the Englishman pointed, motioning with his head towards the stairs behind the bar, where an inscription with 'restricted access' had been discreetly placed on the wall. "Upstairs. Guarding his office and private quarters. If we take them out – if we take out his precious toys, his most important assets – maybe he *will* show. Maybe he will finally confront us."

"Dude, I think we should order something," Alfred observed with a bored sigh, plucking the menu from the other Grim's hand. "Your treat, red coat," he added with a grin. He motioned with his hand and a few moments later a lovely little waitress appeared at their table.

*A nymph.* Perfect-bodied, clad in skin-tight jeans and a nearly see-through pink silk top, long reddish-blond hair braided down her back, acid-green eyes gracing a freckled, pixie face.

Alfred flashed her a million dollars grin and hurriedly ordered the same for everyone - some strawberry-flavored lava-something cocktail which was probably guaranteed to cause at least significant stomach trouble if not worse.

“Let’s see *you* drink that shit, you odious twat,” Arthur stated, rolling his eyes. “They have plain whiskey too, you know?”

“That would have been suspicious,” the American defended, “Kids don’t come here for plain whiskey like old farts like you, red coat, they come to *experiment*! And yeah you bet I’ll drink, it’s not like it can kill me or anything. Just like it *won’t* kill you to sober up every now and then!”

Meanwhile, Lukas had a very bad feeling about the whole thing. His stomach had been gradually cringing more and more with the approach of nightfall, but now he had a downright foreboding and it had been upon him the moment he’d set foot inside the pub. It felt like the ominous glare of some unseen eyes and the current mood and conversation were less than encouraging. Arthur clearly didn’t look troubled enough to be extra cautious and his Grim was displaying the sort of childish enthusiasm for the matter which could only result in shit.

“It’s gonna be fine,” the Dane reassured him softly, shifting in his seat so that he was closer and laid a hand on Lukas’s thigh. An unintended mistake – judging by the subsequent confused look on the taller blond’s face – but the impact was the same. The sorcerer flinched, taken by surprise by the sudden warmth of the large palm on top of his skinny jeans, gaze dropping in his lap. And it wasn’t that it was bad, just... he didn’t know.

“Dude, there’s a weird vibe between the two of you,” Alfred observed brusquely, much to the other Grim’s annoyance. This was a really bad time to bring this up. At least, his contractor had finally decided to wear his protection charms.

Mathias made a sour face. “It’s a distrustful vibe,” he explained with a dramatic sigh, discreetly withdrawing the offending hand. “Lukas thinks I’ll flub it.”

His contractor, who had been too worried to catch onto his attempt to deflect the shit, shook his head and opened his mouth to say something, but right then the nymph waitress returned with a tray with four cocktail glasses and a small white envelope sealed with red wax. She gracefully laid the glasses on the table and then the envelope in front of Lukas.

“Oh, fuck...” the Englishman groaned upon laying eyes on it, half-burying his face in his hands. “I think he knows we’re here.”

Lukas reached for the small off-white square hesitantly, but his Grim snatched it before he could touch it. “Let me open it,” Mathias said. “You don’t know what’s inside.” His words had such a sobering effect that even the American’s usual smile disappeared.

He tore the crimson seal carefully, noticing that the wax was still warm and soft, freshly melted. The sender had been waiting for them. Maybe they had even been followed? The Dane scowled openly, plucking a folded piece of paper from inside and flipping it open. If this Pellemargaroth was indeed the agent of the *one whose name was not to be spoken*, then this job was going to be much harder than any of them was imagining. He read out loud:

*“Would you say it’s fair to steal from a thief? Or maybe you thought I would never find you... You’ll pay for my grievance with more than your blood this time. I have your little brother Emil, so if you don’t want him to die a horrible death, give yourself in his place. My servants down at the Doom Dome are waiting for you, so don’t waste my time, Lukas Bondevik.”*

“No,” Arthur said grimly, shaking his head. “Lukas, no. We don’t even know-...”

No one else said anything, because they could all feel it wasn’t a hoax. Also, it was the one thing no one had expected to happen. The Norwegian seemed to have stopped breathing, he was staring blankly at the black polished surface in front of him, fists clenched in his lap. How could he have been so dumb?! All this time foolishly thinking Emil was safe, just because of his lack of magic abilities! And Tino couldn’t protect him all the time! Not when he went to school, or he was out with his friends, or... In the end, what he’d feared the most had happened – Lukas had failed to protect his baby brother! He’d foolishly thought that if they’d run away from home and from *Bestemoor* no other monsters would ever come after them...

“So, what the fuck do we do now?!” Alfred inquired, finally losing his patience.

“I’ll do what he wants,” Lukas replied, not meeting his gaze. “I can’t let him hurt Emil, it’s out of the question! If he wants me, he can have me.”

“But, mate, that doesn’t mean he’ll let your brother go just like that, what do you think?!” his boss pointed. “This fellow has no qualms about killing children, that’s why we’re after him!”

“Look, I’m not saying that this can’t go very wrong in the end,” Mathias intervened. “But at least now he’s made a move. Maybe he will even show himself, if he thinks he can’t lose and he’s safe. He’s pulled this stunt because he knows you two are both contracted, so he went for the only weak spot you have to make you willingly give up protection. Let’s make him think he’s won, it doesn’t mean we can’t find the boy in the meantime and that we can’t get our hands on the guy himself. He can probably track Lukas because of the blood he’s lost when the automaton injured him, but he can’t track the rest of us. He surely can’t track me.”

“Unless he plans to kill Lukas right away...” the American grumbled.

“Not at the Dome, I don’t think so.”

The pale blond stood up. “Come on, I want to get this over with.”

---

It was past midnight when Berwald rang the doorbell at the Majerus villa. The massive black oak door opened and one of the sorcerer’s vampire servants showed up in the frame – a short boy with mouse-brown hair shadowing garnet-colored eyes. He gave the Swede a quick once-over, scowling and scratching his head, the countless silver rings decorating his childlike fingers twinkling.

“Master’s not taking any appointments this late,” he said dryly. Berwald remembered the kid’s name – Andrei. But what the hell was the other one’s name?

“I’m not looking for your master. I came for the Asian kid, what’s his name, I want to have a word with him. He was with you when you came to get my contractor.”

The petite vampire’s frown deepened. “Leon?! What the fuck has he done this time?”

He rolled his eyes and disappeared inside the house, leaving the door open. Shortly afterwards, the sound of hushed but angry voices was heard from the dark hallway, then Andrei shoved the Asian outside forcefully, almost at the Grim’s feet. “There, he’s all yours. But if he owes you money you can go ahead and rip his skin off, because master is not paying another dime!” Then he slammed the door shut.

With a bored sigh, Leon picked himself up smoothly and dusted invisible specks of dust off his pristine black clothing. “What’s up, big guy?” he inquired, crossing his arms.

“Emil’s gone. D’you know where he is?” Berwald asked bluntly. “I know you’ve been seeing each other for a while now, so don’t fuck around.”

“But... uh...” Leon fidgeted. What the fuck, he’d been really careful with the kid. How did it get out that they’d been messing around?! “I saw him yesterday evening... and he texted me in the morning, like... really early. What do you mean he’s gone?!”

The Swede took a step forward, towering over him. “He was taken by a sorcerer named Pellemargaroth. Did you have a hand in this? Speak now!” His hand shot forward and grabbed the vampire by the throat.

“I-I only serve my master, n-no one else!” the other stuttered. “A-and think what you want but I like Emil! I-I want him... for myself! I would never-”

“But you know where he is! You drank his blood, didn’t you? So you must be able to find him!”

Leon’s eyes widened as he slipped into a trance-like state all the sudden. “I-I can see where he is, but-...”

---

In the Lukas and Mathias went to the Doom Dome by themselves, so as not to arouse any suspicion. Without a word or any look around, they went through the noisy crowd of spectators at the bottom level, then down the stairs with the ‘staff and applicants only’ sign, which lead to the dungeons below. For some reason, the place looked even more sinister this time. The hallways were darker, the smoke and sewer smell more pungent and the occasional gleam of blades and sharp teeth more wicked, while the echo of the stone arches amplified all sounds in a startling fashion.

And he was going to die in this place, the Norwegian realized, mortified, as Mathias asked a couple of lycan guards about Pellemargaroht's servants. It turned out there weren't any in particular, but as any master competitor at the Arena the mysterious sorcerer was served by the regular staff and indeed, he had left them instructions. The guards led the two down a descending side corridor with barred cells on each side, which seemed to go down forever.

"Is this where he keeps the rest of the stuff?" the Grim asked, trying to sound casual. He meant the automatons, but these two lycans didn't seem to know what those were.

"No, no, these cells are the cheapest shit, really."

And one could take their word for it too, the corridor barely had any air shafts, very few torches hung on the outer walls and the cells were cramped, with no benches or hay mattresses on the floor, just bare stone, the rare inhabitants curled up in shapeless heaps on the ground or in corners, shackles hanging by chains from heavy iron hooks in the walls. It was like the inside of a tomb and the air was hot, suffocating.

"But then again, he ain't much of a fighter, is he?" the guard said, glancing at Lukas curiously. "How much did you get on him?"

"What?"

"You're his master, aren't you? I've see you around before, haven't I... Up at the lodges but down here too."

The Dane bit his lip, pondering. Maybe this confusion could help, maybe on the contrary. He had to be careful. "I got a great price on him, really. Will last me a few good gambles, I think," he said cheerfully.

The guards ushered Lukas inside one of the cells and ordered him to take off all his clothes (and protection charms), then to replace them with a light, knee-length sleeveless tunic. After that, they shoved him against the wall and held his hands up, shackling his wrists to the hanging twin chains.

"I need a word with him," the Grim said and the guards shrugged, stepping outside. "Listen—"

Eventually, the sorcerer lifted his head and looked up at him with a forlorn expression. "I'm sorry, Mathias," he murmured. "About how this contract worked out... But you shouldn't be sorry, I probably deserved this, I have bad blood. My grandmother is a necromancer." He paused and swallowed, sighing heavily. "And a long time ago she made me kill someone for... uh..."

*Damn it.* He'd never told anyone about *that night*. But now he was going to die and Kohler had the right to know. If they were going to die together, at least the Dane shouldn't be sorry for him. At least... he could only hope Pellemargaroht was going to release Emil and that he wouldn't drag his baby brother in hell too for his sins.

Mathias sighed. "This is one weird contract, I'll give you that. But you're not evil, you're just a complete mess, necromancer blood or not, and whatever you've done, I've done much

worse.” He reached out and brushed the smaller blond’s hair away from his forehead gently. “And no one has fucked *me* yet,” he added with a wide grin.

***To be continued***

A/N – Wtf – I hear you wonder – Lukas killed someone? Don’t worry, that will be clarified at the right moment, please don’t begrudge the little troll. Also, I feel that this chapter is half-assed...:( Fuck. It gets better, I promise.

**Reviews and comments are LOVE ;)**

# Chapter 17

## CHAPTER 16

A/N – Hello my dear readers! I FINALLY wrote an update, despite... everything. Some shit happened to me this summer but I'm better off writing and trying to keep my mind off it. And nothing better than a good fight to lift our mood, yes?

A little info on **berserkers** as per Wikipedia, etc:

"Berserkers" (or "berserks") were champion [Norse warriors](#) who are primarily reported in [Icelandic sagas](#) to have fought in a [trance](#)-like fury, a characteristic which later gave rise to the English word "berserk." In battle, the berserkers were subject to fits of frenzy. They would howl like wild beasts, foamed at the mouth, and gnawed the iron rim of their shields. According to belief, during these fits they were immune to steel and fire, and made great havoc in the ranks of the enemy. When the fever abated they were weak and tame.

The rage the berserker experienced was referred to as *berserkergang* ("going berserk"). This condition has been described as follows: This fury, which was called *berserkergang*, occurred not only in the heat of battle, but also during laborious work. Men who were thus seized performed things which otherwise seemed impossible for human power. This condition is said to have begun with shivering, chattering of the teeth, and chill in the body, and then the face swelled and changed its color. With this was connected a great hot-headedness, which at last gave over into a great rage, under which they howled as wild animals, bit the edge of their shields, and cut down everything they met without discriminating between friend or foe.

It is also speculated that attaining of the berserker trance was done through the consumption of potions or hallucinogen mushrooms, but there's no actual evidence supporting this theory.

*Victoria – Seychelles*

**Warnings:** graphic descriptions of violence, mentions of substance abuse

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*“ALL OF YOU, BEHOLD THE FATE WHICH AWAITS THE FOOLS WHO WOULD TRY TO ROB A MASTER SORCERER!!!”* a voice boomed through the sound system, but barely heard and largely ignored by the crowd populating the Doom Dome. The mysterious Pellemargaroth was clearly trying to make an example out of his prisoner, but no one seemed to give a damn. The audience just wanted entertainment and blood.

“This contract is going to ruin me, before it kills me,” Mathias sighed, resting his head in the heel of his palm. “*You’re* going to ruin me,” he specified, addressing the delicate brunette girl sitting next to him on one of the comfortable plush sofas in Kiku Honda’s loge. She had large, golden-amber eyes, coffee-colored skin complimented by a light blue, mostly see-



through, sleeveless organza gown and her waist-length hair was artfully swept into two glossy braids down her back.

She laughed at his observation, showing pearly white teeth, a bit on the sharp side. “You’re exaggerating! And besides, after all that hard work why didn’t you place any bets on your contractor?”

“I CAN’T, DAMN IT! Urgh... you can’t place bets on an execution...”

“But does any of you know why they’ve scheduled an execution in prime time?” the Japanese asked, leaning forward in his seat. “There should only be ‘glam matches’ after the interval. All the executions should have been earlier, no?”

The Grim hunched further, with a sour expression. “It’s because it’s supposed to be particularly entertaining, as in particularly gruesome. We certainly haven’t overestimated Pellemargaroht, whoever the hell this person is. He’s ordered my contractor to be chopped into tiny pieces and eaten by goblins for all eyes to feast on.”

Down below in the arena the maintenance staff had brought and placed right in the middle a large metal table with chains and shackles attached, the surface already stained with old, dried blood. Most of the lighting was concentrated on this particular object before one of the iron gates in the arena wall was lifted and a group of creatures walked out into the open, drawing the audience’s attention. The five human-size goblins, with reptilian eyes and long black strands of hair stuck to their dry-skinned skulls were clad in a sort of chainmail aprons and each had a large leather belt with various cutting and hacking tools.

One twisted quirk of the Dome’s owners was to give the execution victims the possibility to defend themselves, and so to keep some hope of escape till the very end, when in fact there was none. This sort of events – which greatly amused the crowd precisely because of that quirk – were made to look like any other match, only the odds were beyond unfavorable for the one supposed to be executed, even if it wasn’t always apparent from the start. This was hardly the case now, though – the hacking table had been put on display expressly to make it clear for the victim what fate awaited them.

“I can’t watch this...” Mathias grumbled, sinking into the cushions and turning his head.

Victoria giggled. “You can’t watch goblins?”

“I can’t watch berserkers.”

“Dude, what the fuck are you doing here, flirting and shit?!” Alfred exclaimed, popping up brusquely and startling the Dane from his misery. “Can’t you see your contractor is fucked?! Those creatures are gonna-”

“I have everything under control!” he snapped, earning an eye-roll from the other Grim. “*You* are supposed to go look for Pellemargaroht, remember?! He wouldn’t miss this, now would he?” With a nervous gesture, he waved Alfred off. “Pfff seriously now, I’m having it hella hard here and nobody gives a fuck about my problems!”

Victoria burst into laughter, dropping back on the cushions and kicking her silk slippers off. “Come on Mathias, this was your idea to begin with, I just prepared what you asked so stop making such a fuss! This had better be entertaining too.”

The goblins, which had gathered around the table, tools at the ready and showing them to the audience suddenly perked up their ears and turned as one towards the iron gate being lifted. Yellowish eyes glinted maliciously and sharp tongues darted out to lick blackened, rotten fangs as a rather tiny figure came out into the arena, stumbling a few steps forward into the sloshing, shallow murk which reached his calves, seeping into his boots and black slacks. Unlike the goblins, Lukas did not wear any armor, just an open, sleeveless silvery fur vest and leather arm guards. His hair had been braided on one side, for added effect, but his bangs still fell loosely over his eyes, which were momentarily closed as he seemed to struggle to regain his balance.

The goblins, greedily eyeing their prey, started inching closer. No music was played over executions so that the audience could hear the victim’s screams and so their low, grumbled chuckles could be heard as they bared their claws for now, their tools tucked away.

Lukas had his eyes still closed, but he had remained motionless, nostrils now flaring visibly as he sniffed the air. Then his eyes opened brusquely – a glassy, much darker shade of blue, reflecting a horrible sort of emptiness.

His head tilted to the side slightly, the rest of his body perfectly still as he observed the approaching goblins, as if counting their steps, one by one. Then, suddenly, two of the goblins which were closest to him were thrown high up in the air, their bodies flipping spectacularly before dropping with a loud splash into the filthy water below.

The crowd roared at the sight of the twin battle hatchets which had appeared in the sorcerer’s hands and the other three creatures pulled back momentarily, growling and drawing their own weapons. One of the fallen goblins managed to clamber back to its feet, but the other wasn’t so lucky – Lukas stomped his boot on its belly and brought one of the hatchets down onto its skull, cracking it open just as it was struggling to get up. Black blood splashed and spilled, adding to the mess while the blond lifted his now dirty weapon and frowned at the sight of it.

It only lasted but a moment before he went for the others. A long kitchen knife was quickly dodged and the goblin holding it lost its head, while the remaining three withdrew towards the table. Lukas kicked the body out of his way and advanced determinedly and when the creatures moved behind the table he kicked it savagely, flipping it over. By now the audience was ecstatic, enjoying the sight of slaughter and anticipating more.

“This is so exciting!” Victoria squealed, nearly jumping from her seat and gripping Mathias’s thigh, but the Grim only shook his head, busying himself with pouring a glass of wine, which he downed in one gulp even if it did nothing.

The goblins started throwing all the knives they had at the sorcerer, but since they were more butchers than fighters lacked the necessary skill and missed grossly. Lukas didn’t even try to dodge the flying blades, instead jumped over the upturned table and swung his hatchets, bringing down two more goblins almost in the blink of an eye. The last remaining one broke into a run, heading for the gate they’d come out of. The creature reached it and pounded with

its fists against the thick bars with sharp cries and squeals, but the lycans inside made no move to open it.

A blow into its chainmail-covered back brought the goblin down on its knees, after which the Norwegian threw away one of his weapons to grab it by the hair, turn it around, lift and shove it against the bars. Black blood splattered the sorcerer's face, hair and clothes as he slammed the blade into the creature's face repeatedly, until the skull was completely smashed.

Only then he let the corpse drop and pulled away from the gate, panting. *Mer! Mer blod! Jeg ønsker MEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEER!!* he roared, while the crowd cheered madly.

"What the hell, why aren't the guards coming?" Mathias asked, slightly worried. "It's over, isn't it?"

"I don't think so," Kiku stated. "Now that they know he can fight, they'll probably give him a real match."

"FUCK! Oh fuck! I don't think-... How long is the potion supposed to last?"

Victoria patted his knee reassuringly. "Funny *you* ask that. Okay, so this is an improved version of the original potion, but as a rule as long as there's something or someone left to kill, the berserker will not snap out of it."

The Japanese was proven right when the gate lifted again and another creature – because it was unlikely to be a man – walked out in the open, instantly acclaimed loudly by the audience.

*"THE PUNISHER! THE PUNISHER!"* the crowd chanted.

The Punisher was tall and bulky, but his muscular body partially covered with brown leather armor was horribly scarred. His head was entirely covered by a tar-stained burlap sack, no face visible and he was armed with a large mace and a broad sword, both weapons stained with dried blood.

"What the hell *is* that thing even? It doesn't seem to be-... alive?" the Grim asked, leaning forward. He only had the time to see Lukas weighing the remaining hatchet in his hand impatiently, rocking back and forth on the balls of his feet, because in the split second it took him to turn towards his friend and for Kiku to answer it was all over and the crowd was screaming again, the erupting noise instantly drowning their conversation. When he looked again, the Punisher was lying face-down in the murk, his contractor now standing onto the back of the half-submerged corpse.

"I think I'd like to meet him," Victoria said with a broad grin, clapping her hands. "He's so cute!"

---

The air in the dungeon was still as hot and suffocating as before, still Lukas felt chilled to the bone and completely drained after the effects of the potion had worn off and the icy-cold 'bath' the lycan guards had given him to clean all the blood and grime of the arena off his body. They'd also given him no clothes this time, only a light blanket, but instead a rough mattress had been brought in and the chains attached to his shackles had been replaced with longer ones, so that now he could at least lie down and get some sleep.

But sleep wouldn't come, not with the pounding headache and the upset stomach. And just like the other time, he *couldn't remember anything*. Again, Lukas had 'woken up' covered in blood, someone's else's blood and with a completely blank mind. Although this time the blood was tar-black and clearly not human, but the sight of it still stirred the ghost remnants of some cold, all-consuming fury which lingered somewhere, on the edge of oblivion, just out of grasp. At some point tears had begun sliding down his cheeks and when he wiped them away with the back of his hand the moisture felt weird, foreign.

"Hey, Lukas! Are you alright?"

The Norwegian blinked quickly, taken by surprise and struggling to focus, hands shaking as they pulled the blanket tighter around his body. There was something strange in the way Kohler was looking at him now, almost apprehensively and it made him feel even more self-conscious.

"I need a cigarette," he whispered. He knew what it was, horror. *'A berserker knows not friend from foe'*

The Grim shook his head. "Maybe later, now you should eat something." He pointed at the tray of food the guards had brought just before his impromptu 'poofing in', with a piece of bread and a bowl of nondescript...stew? "This doesn't look that bad."

"You never... drank a berserker potion, did you?" Lukas glanced up at the Dane, nearly holding his breath, and saw the man flinch. It was bad enough to disgust even a Grim. *He* was bad enough.

"No, I-..."

"It's because there's elk piss in it?"

"Look, that's not... I mean it wasn't for everyone, only some people did this sort of thing. And because of it, they didn't even live in the village, they were too dangerous, they were-..."

"Monstrous?" the sorcerer whispered, curling up tighter against the wall and resting his forehead against his knees. "But *I*'ve done it before, I've turned into a mindless beast and I killed and-... It doesn't really matter that I don't remember anything, the fact still stands."

Mathias finally sat down next to his contractor and awkwardly gathered the smaller blond in his arms. "Lukas, I'm not *judging you*. It was a necessity, you can't fight otherwise. Not this kind of fights, anyway."

“That night, my grandmother made me drink a berserker potion. She didn’t tell me what it was until afterwards, when it was morning and I was standing in the kitchen, and there was blood... everywhere. And she told me she’d sent me to do a job,” Lukas mumbled, nose buried in the crook of the Dane’s neck. “I just-... if only I knew what happened, what I’ve done... I could at least beg for forgiveness.”

---

Leon was angry, a sort of anger mixed with a deep-rooted fear, something he hadn’t felt in a very, very long time. He’d forgotten what it was like to have something, anything just for yourself, something truly precious, and then to have it torn, stolen from you by either fate, time or malevolent hands. It had been centuries since he’d last lost anything worth caring of. And now it was happening again! He’d allowed himself to be ensnared by Emil’s pure, innocent charm and he’d been oblivious to the fragility of this situation and the trouble and suffering it could lead to... But all of that didn’t matter, he had to get his little human boyfriend back, or at least do anything in his power to.

Finding the boy’s location hadn’t been very complicated given the ability to connect their thoughts, the vampire had quickly ascertained that Emil was currently being kept into a dungeon and upon ‘seeing’ the lycan guards who brought him food and water the mystery had been cleared. Besides, the sorcerer named by the Swedish Grim - Pellemargaroth – was also involved in the Doom Dome games, so it made sense that he would hide his prisoner in the bowels of the arena. It was the safest keep, most of the labyrinth of corridors which made up the dungeons was not only heavily guarded but also impossible to navigate by an inexperienced outsider.

Still, there was another piece of information he’d gathered upon ‘glancing’ into the teen’s mind – namely that Pellemargaroth had no intention whatsoever to release Emil but planned to have him publicly executed for the fun of the bloodthirsty crowd sometime soon. As bad as it sounded, this provided an opening, because it meant that he could, with a bit of luck, snatch Emil from under the sorcerer’s nose, if only... he could get his masters’ help.

Anri Majerus on the other hand was bitterly bored. The slow grind of her arranged marriage pressed upon everything, diluting the taste of all joys of life. Sometimes, when she’d had one cup of wine too many, she contemplated divorcing Luca and just asking the Reaper or any other of the handsome, fierce arena fighters she’d bedded to marry her instead. She was rich, none of them would say no.

“So how old is the boy?” she asked with a sigh.

“Almost... seventeen,” the Asian offered, a bit unsure because honestly, he’d never bothered with this aspect. Age wasn’t something he talked or cared about anymore.

The blonde observed him pensively. “Well, I suppose it’s quite late for someone to *awaken* at this age, if they haven’t yet... But then again, it is very likely that if they do awaken, their potential might be out of the ordinary. What did my husband say about this?”

Leon shrugged. “He couldn’t be bothered, he had work to do.”

“Of course, he was probably busy trolling someone online,” Anri rolled her eyes. “Okay, here’s the deal – I’m willing to give this a try. If the kid does *awaken*, we will take him under our protection. If not... I hope you do understand that there would be no point for us to start a quarrel with another sorcerer over some useless mortal.”

*To be continued*

**Reviews and comments are LOVE ;)**

Mer! Mer blod! Jeg ønsker MEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEER!! – More! More blood! I want MOOOOOOOORE!! (I hope with all my heart that this isn’t another Google translate fuck-up. If it is, let me know and I will promptly correct...)

# Chapter 18

## CHAPTER 17

A/N – Hello everyone! Currently I am having some time off work and, aside from doing my best to clear my head after a very weird and agitated summer, I'll be trying to catch up on my fics. So I'm making an effort to get things done around here, as much as possible and write as many chaps as I can before the break is over. That being said, enjoy today's update!

---

True to his reputation, Alfred F. Jones was proving completely useless when it came to helping his contractor with solving the Pellemargarothe case. Not that it was an easy task – since the sorcerer had both Lukas and his little brother in his grasp (and Lukas could be protected, but the boy was completely out of their reach) he and Arthur could not go on with the initial plan of storming the pub and taking out whatever automatons Pellemargarothe had there in an attempt to lure him out (and the Englishman was also highly skeptical that Alfred could handle them on his own). But it was due to the American's unpleasant character and his disastrous 'service provider customer reviews' that he had made no connections in the magic underworld and he was very nearly thwarting Kirkland's own efforts.

All in all, things weren't exactly looking up.

Arthur's top informant – the vampire prince Alin – was prudently reluctant to dig any further into this story and they couldn't afford his fees anyway at this point, while Lukas's cousin Tino – who had actually gotten a lead on the boy from a surprising (and ominous) source was clearly no game for Pellemargarothe either. That and Mathias could have really done without dealing with a certain Swedish Grim after the Majerus business... For now it was quite enough that he had to take care of his contractor.

"What if he sends me a client?" Lukas asked suddenly, blowing out a cloud of smoke and resting his head against the stone wall. "Tino said that... Well it could fucking happen and slaves can't say no. What the fuck am I going to do then?! Fighting them is not an option..."

His contractor had eventually gotten his 'clothes' back, but apparently the lycan guards had dropped some suggestive comments and the Dane sighed, realizing the full implications of this. Last thing he needed right now was a hard, raw pounding in the ass. "Maybe it will be a woman," he offered. "That wouldn't be so bad, right? Besides, if anyone is crazy enough to want a berserker, it must be a girl, I don't think any man would-... Men don't like fighters and I know for a fact that most clients are women, Mrs. Majerus for example is a regular. And your cousin Tino-..."

"What?"

Mathias met the Norwegian's baffled gaze and reconsidered the particular piece of information he was about to divulge. "Uh...I mean that's what he must have meant. Anyway,

if it happens we'll think of something, don't worry." He took a deep breath, deciding to approach a more important and tricky subject. "Uh, more importantly, Tino and Berwald have a lead on Emil. They found out he's being kept here in the dungeons as well."

The sorcerer gasped, throwing the butt of his cigarette as he sat up, eyes widening. "OH FUCK! But... How did they find out?! Did they find Pellemargaroht?" he inquired hurriedly, gripped by anguish. God, what had he gotten Emil into?! These dungeons must have been one of the most dreadful places in the whole magic underworld!! And what if... Pellemargaroht wasn't really keeping his little brother as a guarantee that nobody tried anything against him but rather, if Lukas kept defying him by refusing to die, Emil was going to be sacrificed instead? What if Pellemargaroht planned to throw Emil to the goblins next?!

"No... actually Emil's boyfriend found out," Mathias muttered in a low voice. Here it came...

Aside from the already mind-numbing dread, Lukas suddenly felt as if a heavy weight had dropped in his stomach. Emil had gotten a *boyfriend*? And he hadn't even bothered to tell him about it, and neither had Tino, who in contrast seemed to be well aware of it. The thought hurt, aside from the fact that it brought out Lukas's own inability to form any meaningful relationships...

*But wait...*

"How *did* Emil's boyfriend find out? Is he a sorcerer too?!" And if he was, how the Hell had Emil met him?! Was this guy one of Tino's dubious business connections?

Now Kohler looked really uncomfortable for some reason, like a man expecting a shit-storm. A deep sigh came from him before answering. "Actually, no... He's one of Luca Majerus's vampire servants," he stated, nibbling onto his upper lip.

"*WHAT?! EMIL'S BOYFRIEND IS A VAMPIRE?!*" the smaller blond jumped. Luca Majerus was the one who had forced Tino to- "This is your fault!! If you hadn't-

"Actually it's yours," the Dane cut him off dryly. "If you hadn't pulled the *rubirosa* stunt on me, I would have *never* gone to Majerus for help."

Lukas deflated, curling back up into the corner. It *was* his fault. Everything was.

But what the hell, Tino was supposed to take care of Emil, why had he allowed this?! Or maybe Emil had done stupid shit behind his cousin's back too?! Maybe he thought having a relationship with a vampire was cool or something, maybe he'd just been an easy prey... either way he was probably nothing more than a snack for that guy and yet some more shit to take care of, if nothing worse happened. He buried his face in his hands.

"Come on, it's not all gloom and doom," Mathias said eventually. "I think there's *one* thing we can solve for now. It might help putting your mind at ease, or at least... give you some closure? I mean, I don't know, it can make it better or worse, but at least you'll know."

"Know what?"



“What happened the first time you took a berserker potion. I know someone who can help you remember or at least find out.”

---

Victoria waved the lycan guards off with a gracious flick of her wrist as she sashayed into the cell, brushing past the Grim. Lukas stood up, awkwardly smoothing his hair and tunic, unable to keep from staring at the exotic beauty. No wonder Kohler knew this sort of women, he thought with a slight sting.

“Oh my *God*, he’s SO cute!” the brunette exclaimed, walking up to the Norwegian and examining him from head to toe in complete awe. “Lukas,” she said softly. “Girls *really* like berserkers, just ignore whatever this heathen says about it! You were *so wild* in there, I could have just done anything to-”

“Yeah, that’s why you’re charging me a fee in gold...” the Dane pointed dryly from behind her, with a sour grimace.

“Well...” the witch hummed pensively. “I might reconsider by the end of this. I might just charge you something else. You know, it’s kinda hard to choose between tough and cute and why would you have to, anyway?” She reached out, cupping the sorcerer’s cheek gently. “Come on love, let’s do this.”

“Uh...wha-“

Victoria pulled out a long needle from her braided hair. “The memories thing, I mean. Give me your hand. How old you were back then?”

“Twelve...”

She dragged the tip of the needle over the pad of his thumb, opening a bloody gash before taking the thumb in her mouth and closing her eyes. Lukas hissed when her tongue dipped into the wound, resisting the impulse to withdraw his hand. The ‘examination’ seemed to take a while, after which Victoria’s eyes opened brusquely, their golden hue more vividly bright, and she was silent for a long moment before letting out a deep sigh.

“Well, bunny, I have some good news and some bad news about that night...” she declared eventually.

“What’s the good news?” the Grim asked impatiently.

“The good news – you didn’t kill anyone, it was a wild boar you slaughtered and brought back from the woods,” the witch told Lukas, who instantly let out a relieved sigh, even if he almost didn’t dare to believe it.

“...what’s the bad news then?” he murmured.

Victoria hesitated for a moment. “The bad news is that your grandmother was really pissed about it and she punished you. Since you weren’t able to bring her a human corpse like she’d

asked, she cut *you* open instead and carved out a piece of your liver.”

“Oh... fuck!” Mathias grumbled.

The Norwegian felt faint, stomach turning and bile rising in his throat as he leaned back against the wall for support, a hand clamped over his mouth. Good thing he hadn’t eaten... *Yeah, that’s exactly the kind of thing Bestemoor would have done, thank God we managed to run away...* Still, tears pricked the corners of his eyes and he wiped them off hastily.

“But I don’t have a scar...”

“Necromancers don’t leave scars, it’s one of the most prized skills of their trade,” Victoria explained. “And the liver regenerates naturally, so don’t worry. I’m sure you’re just fine now.”

*Fine?!* Bestemoor was his and Emil’s only close family, she was supposed to raise them, to take care of them, not chop them to pieces! He wasn’t *fucking fine* at all! Fortunately (or unfortunately) the witch quickly distracted him from the depressive thoughts of how horrible his family was by taking his hand again and trying her teeth some more on his injured finger.

“Since I know how much fuss Mathias makes about money, I’ll take something else as payment for this little service,” she said with a wink. “I want to ‘see’ something else too...”

Lukas blinked, neither he nor the Dane momentarily grasping what she was talking about, until...

“Oh my God, *three* men and they were so hot...!”

“FUCK! No! Stop!”

But Victoria had no intention of releasing his hand, not when she was ‘seeing’ something this interesting now.

“What three men?” the Grim inquired. “What the hell are you doing?”

“Please, stop!” Lukas begged, now looking positively tormented.

“Uh-oh...” she hummed around his finger, eyes darting towards Mathias with a mischievous glint. After two more agonizing minutes, she finished, releasing the abused thumb with a soft pop.

The Dane scowled openly now, while his contractor slumped to the ground, curling up and burying his face in his hands again. “What the hell was that about?” he demanded, towering over the brunette.

“Mathias Kohler, you owe me two thousand in gold,” Victoria stated with a broad grin.

“*No fucking way*, the berserker potion was that expensive?!” Lukas cried, looking up brusquely with wide eyes.

“No, sweet bunny, don’t worry. But Mr. Fierce Viking has some older debts as well, from another life so to speak.”

“Yeah, and?”

“I saw what you did, *daddy*... And to think that all this time I thought you had this *perfect* work ethic, no fucking your contrac-

“SHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!” Mathias’s face fell visibly and his expression became significantly meeker. “I-I’ll pay everything, I swear, just keep your mouth shut about this, okay? I really don’t need my reputation fucked!” he hissed in a low voice.

“Really?”

The Grim gripped Victoria’s arm and pulled her out of the cell, and out of the sorcerer’s hearing range. “Listen, I can explain, okay?! I really didn’t want that to happen, it was just a spell gone wrong, it’s not like I would-”

“Mathias, you know I’ve always liked you and we had some really good time together too, yeah? But what I saw just now... I just need to see more of *you* doing *that*! I mean you two have an *amazing* chemistry!”

“WHA- No, I can’t, no way! I don’t do this kind of stuff and Lukas is really sensitive about these things too and I couldn’t do it again, not with an *audience* for Thor’s sake and in fact not at all!”

“Mathias... do it, let me see and I’ll erase your debt. All of it.” Then she stood on tiptoes and whispered something in his ear.

---

“Did you get in trouble?” Lukas asked him warily as he returned.

“Well when the fuck am I NOT in trouble...” The Grim went and sat down next to him on the mattress. “Are you okay though? Maybe this wasn’t such a great idea after all.” And in the light of the most recent developments it really hadn’t been! Damn Victoria and her crazy quirks!

The Norwegian was chewing absently on his thumbnail. “Yeah... I mean my family sucks and I didn’t even realize how much until now and I suck big time myself because I really did a shit job protecting my little brother. I thought that it was enough if we’d run away from home and from *her*, but... it isn’t and me doing all sorts of shit didn’t exactly help either.”

Mathias sighed. “Actually, Lukas, you could have turned up a lot worse. You could have stayed home and picked up her trade.”

“Mmm... Speaking of trade, looks like I’ll have to go in another ‘raid’, because I don’t see how else we can pay two thousand in gold anytime soon.”

The Dane bit his lip, once more cursing his luck. This certain *thing* had complicated his existence significantly and made him terribly nervous. Which was kind of stupid for someone who was several hundred years old. And it wasn't like he hadn't employed plenty of unorthodox methods of solving things in his previous contracts, but Lukas, despite pulling some uninspired stunts, was far from being as wicked as other sorcerers he'd served, on the contrary, he was rather innocent. This made things kind of anticlimactic and into conflict with the need to protect his young contractor.

“Do you want to drink my blood now?”

Mathias nodded, his hand reaching absently to brush the pale blond's bangs away from his forehead when the sorcerer settled closed and tilted his head to the side, obediently exposing his neck.

*‘Lukas really likes you’*

He could really have done without knowing something as tricky as that.

***To be continued***

A/N – Victoria is one CRAZY fangirl, if you haven't figured this out already...

**Reviews and comments are LOVE ;)**

# Chapter 19

## CHAPTER 18

A/N – Hello my dear readers! I am back to work and yeah, my vacation time only produced one chap of this, but now I've put my efforts into writing a new update because damn – IT'S TIME TO BRING ON SOME MORE ACTION YOU GUYS!!! I am soooooo excited!!! And for those of you who were waiting for some more HongIce, this is your lucky day ;)))

**Warnings:** graphic descriptions of violence

*Mei – Taiwan*

*Margareta – fem!Moldova*

---

In the still dimmed lights of the enormous arena, the Doom Dome was slowly filling up for the prime time and the crowd was already swarming with excitement for the evening's upcoming 'glam matches', bookmakers busy running around and yelling to make themselves heard over the rising noise. Up in the luxurious loges of the magic underworld's nobility servants were bringing food and refreshments for their masters and their guests and the Majerus loge was, of course, no exception.

Anri Majerus – who was openly enjoying being able to go to places where, in the virtue of an obsolete and futile tradition, her underage husband couldn't – had come accompanied by no less than four of the household's vampire servants in addition to her usual human serving staff, but this night was special. If Leon wasn't wrong (which wasn't an unlikely possibility), the Majerus family could get their hands on something valuable, but things could also turn out to be potentially troublesome so it was best if she had back up, just in case.

"Well, this had better not turn out to be a total bore," Andrei stated dryly, leaning over the railing to glance down at the maintenance staff who were fishing up the props and remains of the executions session from earlier from the murky water of the arena below.

The Asian vampire gave his mistress a hopeful look as Anri plopped lazily into a high armchair, the lavish blue silk dress fanning out around her like the petals of an exquisite flower and one of the two vampire girls who had come aside from Andrei and Leon hurried to pour a cup of wine for her.

"Why do you never trust me?" he whined, scowling at the other vampire. Andrei only rolled his eyes.

"Leon, are you sure they'll put up another execution now? I thought they don't do that in prime time," the blonde asked, taking a sip of wine.

“Oh, I’m sure...”

---

Lukas flinched when the grated door of his cell rattled open and the lycan guards barged in all the sudden. Before he could even clamber to his feet they hauled him up and unhooked the chains attached to his shackles, then he was pushed out of the cell.

“What-”

“Your master wants you to watch one of the matches tonight,” one of them growled curtly, the clawed paw clamped on the sorcerer’s shoulder shoving him ahead in the narrow tunnel.

“To *watch*? But why-”

But even as the question left his lips, his stomach cringed in horror, realizing what this was about. He hadn’t died in *his* match and now Pellemargaroht was going to throw Emil into the Arena! *No. No. No. NO! Oh God... good God, have mercy... please...* His little brother had no magic, no Grim protector and no spell was going to save him! His limbs grew numb with dread and tears began streaming silently down his face.

*No, this can’t be happening... Please, no, not Emil!*

“Please, don’t! Can I-... Can I talk to master?! Please, I want to talk to him! Ask him to put me in the match instead! PLEASE!”

But the lycans ignored his plea, grumbling something unintelligible while they kept pushing him forward. They took him up to the patrons area and lead him to one of the unused arena gates and deftly attached his chains to the thick metal bars, so that he couldn’t even as much as turn around. Like this, Lukas had no choice but to watch whatever was going on in the arena, or close his eyes at most. But he would still hear-... And there was nothing to do, *nothing*, because neither Mathias nor any of his friends could take on the masters of the Dome to get Emil out!

Still, no gloomy thought could have prepared him for the horrid sight of his little brother walking out a few minutes later – no, being shoved out into the arena through one of the other gates, stumbling into the shallow water with a frightened expression, blinded by the sudden brightness of lights and overwhelmed by the sight and noise of the bloodthirsty crowd above, the iron breastplate visibly too heavy for his thin body.

*Forgive me, bror... please forgive me...*

Emil turned around and glanced up in complete confusion, clutching a long rapier he clearly didn’t know what to do with and uncomfortably grimacing at the filthy water seeping into his boots and jeans.

“Is that the boy?” Anri asked, leaning forward. “What the hell, now they’re executing *children*? I thought...”

At the sight of his helpless boyfriend, Leon's hands gripped the railing and his jaw clenched. Like fuck was he going to take this shit, he could only hope Emil would give him a bit of help too though...

"Don't you fucking go do anything stupid if he doesn't *awaken*, you dumb motherfucker!" Andrei hissed at him. "We're not starting a fucking war for nothing, got it?!"

The raven-haired vampire didn't answer, continuing to scowl. In the next moment another gate opened and four jet-black furred, enormous wolves leaped forward, water splashing under their clawed paws. The crowd erupted in excited screams as the beasts scanned their surroundings with fiery-yellow eyes and their noses avidly sniffed the air, stirred by the pungent, pervasive scent of blood, old and new.

"Fuck..." Leon muttered.

White in the face and almost visibly shaking, Emil started to slowly withdraw towards the wall, the rapier held in front of him. But the movement only alerted the wolves sooner and they all focused on him instantly, snarling muzzles baring razor-sharp teeth. The beasts started forward with slow, careful steps, watching their prey intently and no doubt planning to corner it.

Then one of the wolves suddenly leaped forward, going straight for the teen and Emil let out a scream, dropping the sword as his arms flew up to protect his face.

"NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!" Lukas screamed, squeezing the bars until his knuckles went white and dropping on his knees.

"*Awaken...* NOW!" the Asian whispered.

Suddenly, the water seemed to erupt right from under the attacking wolf's belly, instantly solidifying into a thick, dark-reddish ice spike as it rose, going straight through the beast's body, spraying a fountain of blood and entrails before leaving the gruesome carcass impaled on its top.

At first, all noise died down brusquely, everyone unable to comprehend what had occurred, while Emil straightened his back and wiped some of the gore off his face with a disgusted grimace. Still, there was an odd expression on his face and his pupils had dilated in a peculiar fashion. But the crowd became lively again as the other three wolves began drawing closer again, their snarls louder and more aggressive as they now smelled danger as well and when Emil suddenly flicked his wrist upwards and another ice spike shot up, impaling a second creature, the cheering became deafening, people pushing towards the railing to see better. Even Anri stood up from her seat, eyes widened in awe.

"FUCK, YES!!" Leon exclaimed and pumped his fist, excitement stretching his face into a broad grin.

Lukas could only stare, stunned and half-disbelieving. Was it really his little brother doing *that*? Could Emil have manifested such a fantastic power all the sudden?! Because it didn't

look like a mere spell, but rather a native magic ability... And most importantly, was it enough to save him?!

Meanwhile, the teen sent another two more spikes soaring from the ground of the arena, even taller and thicker than the first two, making the layer of water almost go dry. He missed the remaining wolves and motioned downwards with his hand, making the pillars melt back down so he could use the water anew. The next try got another of the creatures, but the last remaining wolf nearly reached Emil, one thick spike erected in the last second the only thing keeping its teeth from the teen's head. A final pillar of ice put an end to it, more blood raining down over him and the beast's carcass nearly collapsing over him as the ice melted. The crowd broke in frantic cheers, ecstatic at the sight of fresh blood being spilled.

"Did you see that?! How awesome was that?" Leon cried, clapping his hands. "He killed all of them!"

"It's not over," one of the girls pointed, motioning towards the arena. The raven-haired vampire turned, his smile fading somewhat, and saw that the gate had been lifted again and more black wolves emerged into the open. The audience howled, ready for more slaughter.

"Oh, *come on!* WHAT THE FUCK?!"

Panicked now, Emil raised his hand quickly, sending a spike of ice to block the beasts' path, but it did nothing and the structure itself melted back a few moments later. The blond was now staring at his hands with a perplexed expression and Leon saw blood had started running from the teen's nose and then Emil collapsed on his knees, looking on the verge of fainting.

"What-..."

"He used too much of his power, and too soon," Anri observed, sighing. "Without proper training his body can't handle all that magic, now he's completely drained and if he tries to use some more... it won't be good."

"They'll kill him!"

She nodded. "Go."

The vampire tossed away his black cloak and was over the railing in the blink of an eye, in a perfectly calculated leap which made him land straight in front of Emil, splashing both of them with murk.

"Don't worry, my love, Leon is here!" he declared loudly and emphatically, for everyone to hear, gracefully fishing a handkerchief out of his pocket and offering it to his boyfriend as he helped the teen lean against the stone wall for support. "Um... you don't smell too good-"

Blinking owlishly, the icy blond gave him a puzzled look, then tried to push his arm away, cheeks flushing slightly. "Y-You're such a fucking clown..." he muttered embarrassed, wiping his face hastily and not very effectively.



“I’m guessing they’ll up the game now,” Anri stated, leaning back in her armchair and resting her chin in the heel of her palm.

And right she was – in the crowd’s growing roar the gate opened again and an enormous wild boar marched out in the arena, red-eyed and blowing steam through its nostrils. Leon moved lightning fast, picking up Emil’s discarded rapier from the water and throwing it straight into one of the wolves’ skull, before drawing out both of his own swords, motioning for the teen to stay behind him.

There were three more of them left, but the boar was the worst thing by far and it soon became clear that either the beasts were unusually intelligent or someone was controlling them, because the wolves withdrew suddenly while the boar charged forward as fast as its thick, short legs could, with a menacing growl.

The Asian pushed Emil away and waited, jumping out of its path in the last second. He attempted a full thrust into the creature’s back, but its coarse hair-covered skin turned out unexpectedly thick and the blade only grazed it superficially, managing to infuriate the monster more. Leon lost his balance and tumbled off its back in the murk, one of the wolves pouncing on him the moment he was down. The beast’s fangs sunk into his shoulder but the vampire managed to get back on his feet wrestling it and driving his blades viciously through the massive body.

Panting hard and grimacing in pain, Leon readied his swords for the other two wolves which were sauntering closer with teeth bared, drawn by the scent of his blood. The vampire threw a quick glance towards his injured shoulder and rolled it with a hiss, it was already healing but his left arm still felt a tad weak. He straightened his back, but in the next second something shoved him from behind – the boar he’d momentarily forgotten about – and he fell face-first into the water, the creature proceeding to trample over him with its hooves.

“Oh wow... he’s getting his ass kicked,” Andrei observed, unimpressed. “Mei, Margareta,” he called for the girls, motioning with his head towards the arena. “Make it quick and interesting.”

The two brunettes moved in perfect sync at their boss’s order, jumping down over the railing and landing in the middle of the arena and instantly making the audience cheer madly at the sight of their fancy black velvet dresses, tight black leather corsets and especially the gleaming blades which were instantly produced from inside their clothes.

Ignoring the danger, Emil ran and struggled to pull his crushed boyfriend out of the murk, while one of the girls made her steel cane morph into a large axe and brought it down over the boar’s skull. Eventually, the icy blond managed to help Leon up on his knees, although still in bad shape after his spine had been snapped in at least three places. A few steps away, the boar finally collapsed with a long growled wail and a large splash, eliciting more mad cheers from the crowd.

“Yeah, yeah, they’re so fucking happy because everyone wants to see women, that’s the shit, you know?” Leon grumbled, running a hand over his face and wet hair, trying to shake off some of the filth.

Meanwhile, a cloaked, hooded figure slipped past the curtain separating the Majerus loge from the inner hallway and walked up behind Anri's armchair. They didn't get too close though, because Andrei had a gun pointed to their chest in the blink of an eye.

"What are you doing, lady Majerus?" the newcomer inquired.

"I'm taking the boy for our household, as you can see he's very *talented*. My servants scouted him and we want him," the blonde replied, without as much as gracing the sorcerer with a glance.

"He is mine," Pellemargaroth said, politely but firmly. "You can't just take him. As for you wanting him for your household, allow me to doubt it. How do I know this isn't just an arrangement? He is meant to die, I wish it so. And I'm very much suspecting that you want to save him."

"Then you are a fool. If you know anything about the Majerus family – and you should – then you know we've never *saved* anyone, not without a very precise and self-serving purpose at any rate. As for him being yours, you have forsaken him when you threw him in the arena to be eaten by wolves, now whatever we fish from the muck is ours."

"But--"

Anri lost her patience. "We know who you are, so I strongly suggest you don't push your luck or my servants will deal with you."

***To be continued***

**Reviews and comments are LOVE ;)**

## Chapter 20

### CHAPTER 19

A/N – Hello my dear readers! I guess at this point we can say things are kinda getting on track, but well... Lukas is not out of the woods yet. And maybe the worse is yet to come... who knows? But no spoilers fer ye, nope, no sir ;)

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The living-room was full of smoke and the Englishman was lying limply on the couch, eyes closed and his head thrown back over one of the armrests. He was dead tired after spending so many nights at the Doom Dome, eyes peeled for the elusive sorcerer named Pellemargaroth, and his days with his own personal endeavors (since Lukas wasn't around to help) to 'raise' the much-needed funding for their operations. He felt exhausted in more ways than one and when his Grim dumped an ice pack on his forehead, he let out a grateful groan.

"Dude, you need to stop fucking drinking so much, my head is *killing* me!" Alfred muttered, plopping down at the free end of the couch and kicking an almost empty whiskey bottle off the coffee table as he stretched his legs.

Arthur ignored him. "Damn, last night was quite a show," he grumbled. "I honestly thought the poor kid was going to kick the bucket... But he's sort of safe now, yeah?"

"Safe he is, but not exactly free. The Majerus family doesn't do anything for no gain and considering what we have seen last night, they won't let him go anytime soon. The kid's gift is quite amazing!"

The green-eyed blond nodded. "It does take a great amount of power, but that can only be useful when he's got water around, so, unless he can do other tricks he's not aware of just yet... Anyway, the point is that Majerus snatched him from Pellemargaroth's hands, so what's stopping us now? I think you can get Lukas out of that bloody dungeon, can't you? After that, we storm the bastard's place like we planned to!"

Mathias scowled, crossing his arms. He couldn't have been any less comfortable with the thought of his contractor locked up in that dreadful place, but as long as Pellemargaroth remained alive he was going to be an unpredictable complication for all of them... Especially considering that he was the agent of *the-one-who-must-not-be-named*... No, it was better if they finished this as soon as possible.

"If we remove the Doom Dome from the equation, Pellemargaroth might just disappear again," the Dane pointed. "We already know he has a thing against being seen... But he did show up last night, to talk to lady Majerus. I didn't see his face, but he did show up. And I think... he will show up again for the final match."

The sorcerer lying onto the opposite couch shifted, opening his eyes. "... the *final* match?"

“He’s not going to let Lukas live and he’s not underestimating us either, so in the next match he’ll do his worst. He’ll most likely bring out the automatons. *Nothing* and *no one* has ever won a match against them.”

Arthur grimaced, tossing aside the ice pack and rubbing his upper arms as if he were suddenly cold. “But... he knows that Lukas is *contracted*! How is that supposed to work?!” Not to mention he wasn’t exactly comfortable with his subordinate pulling that berserker stunt again... There was no need for any of them to delve into their dark side any more than they had already, and the Norwegian... well, he was rather fragile.

“Grim contracts aren’t foolproof...” Mathias replied, chewing on his bottom lip as he threw a glance at Jones. “Shit can happen.” The American only rolled his eyes. “But I think it’s the best chance we’ve got to get Pellemargaroth. If we don’t, he’ll be trouble down the road, you can be sure of it. He won’t let it slide and he’ll try some other shit next. I don’t think you want that.”

---

Tino could barely make the shape of his cousin in the semi-obscurity of the cell, the lycan guards he’d had to pay a substantial bribe to in order to be allowed to visit not bothering to leave him a torch as they’d walked away. The Finn’s scowl had only deepened the farther the guards were taking him, he’d seen enough of the inside of the dungeons, but not the part where the slaves were being kept and it was much, much worse! And he couldn’t even imagine what it must have been like to be a helpless prisoner, in chains!

“So... how’re you holding up?” he asked warily.

“I’ve had better days, but fuck, I guess I can’t complain...” Lukas shrugged awkwardly, coming as close to the grates as his chains allowed, which was no more than two steps. “At least Emil is alive and he’s-... he’s safe, isn’t he?”

Tino shuffled his feet, lowering his gaze, even if the other couldn’t probably see much of him either. “Yeah... I mean, he has to spend some time with the Majerus family now, I’m afraid there’s no way around that. But they’ll take care of him, so don’t worry!” He paused, clearing his throat. “Look, I didn’t know... about the vampire boyfriend. I swear! He was going behind my back and apparently Berwald had found out but Emil had convinced him to stay silent... so they both fucked me!”

“Of course he did,” the Norwegian sighed, not suspecting his cousin’s lie. “That’s why I was saying... I failed him as a brother and he doesn’t trust me. I knew he’d go do some shit like that behind our back...”

“Bullshit! If anything, we both failed because we didn’t set him straight when we should have, that’s what,” Tino pointed. “He’s not stupid, he knew very well he was doing something bad, that’s why he kept it under wraps, the little brat!”

“I guess...”

Lukas knew that, but the problem was that both he and Tino were awfully inappropriate to set *anyone* straight, seeing how he charmed people disguised as a prostitute and robbed them and his cousin fought for money in the dirtiest gladiatorial fights in the city and slept with rich women in the same purpose (because he knew *way too many* details not to...). Considering all that, none of them was exactly a role model for his teen brother...

“Eh, besides, now that he’s awakened as a sorcerer, I suppose that he too could get a contract if we want to make sure-”

“No! Fuck, no, Tino!” Lukas stated, determined. “That’s really the last thing he needs! I mean it!”

His cousin wanted to say something in reply, but one of the lycan guards appeared brusquely behind him and laid a paw on his shoulder.

“Time’s up! Let’s go!”

Lukas sighed deeply, slumping back against the cold wall, but in the next second the door of his cell rattled open and he was back on his feet, startled since he hadn’t heard or seen anyone else coming. A cloaked figure slipped inside, their steps making no sound as they advanced and the Norwegian drew backwards, sticking his back against the wall and eyes widened in fear. Even if his Grim was always somewhere close, at least in theory, now he had a sudden foreboding, similar to the sensation he’d had the last time they’d been to Pellemargaroth’s pub.

One of the guards brought a torch this time and stuck it in a holder in the wall, casting orange flickers onto the black fabric of the hood masking the visitor’s face.

“Now you’d better be a good boy and behave, or else...” the lycan warned, wiggling a clawed finger in the sorcerer’s direction before disappearing into the corridor and leaving the two alone.

Lukas only panicked further when the newcomer stepped closer and reached out, tilting his chin up with a leather-gloved hand. Were they *a client*? And fuck, they sure didn’t look a woman... *FUCK*.

“Oh my, you are very pretty,” the man spoke at last, tilting his hooded head in turn, pensively. His voice was low and particularly unpleasant, like a choked, coarse croak. “What’s the matter, are you afraid now? Could this be some bad karma for all the people you robbed after leading them on with the false promise of pleasure? See, I know *all* about you, Lukas Bondevik, I know what a naughty boy you are...” he cackled maliciously, fingers releasing the Norwegian’s chin to thread through the pale blonde strands, swiping them behind one ear.

Was this... *Pellemargaroth*? But he hadn’t shown up until now, so why-... “D-Don’t touch me!” Lukas mumbled, turning his head away.

“No?” the other sorcerer croaked, amused. “Why, what do you think will happen if I do? Do you really think your Grim is going to do anything to me?” The face covered by the hood came closer. “Seriously, why do you think you’re still here, even after your little brother has

escaped my grasp? Your Grim should have gotten you out of here by now... that is, if he hadn't known what he does, namely that I'm not to be messed with!" A creepy giggle came in reply to the blond's puzzled stare. "That's right, you didn't know, did you? He's afraid of me. Everyone around here with a sound judgment is afraid of me!"

Lukas scowled. Maybe there was something Kohler hadn't told him, aside from his plan, which otherwise made perfect sense? But the Dane had not opposed the idea of going after Pellemargarothe in the first place, could it have been something he'd discovered in the meantime? Still, the Grim must have had a plan of sorts, he wasn't going to let himself get killed so easily! At least, Lukas needed to believe that right now.

"See, if I do this, he will feel it too," Pellemargarothe said gleefully, gloved hand trailing down over the other's light tunic and giving a hard pinch to his chest. "And if I give you a good pounding he'll feel that too, and *he will take it*, for all the mighty Viking he is!" he laughed almost hysterically.

"FUCK YOU!" the Norwegian spat, contemplating a hearty kick in the bastard's balls for a few seconds before he actually delivered it, because the pinch had nearly made his eyes water. If he was screwed, might as well do some damage in turn. "I'm not afraid of you!" Okay, now that was a lie, but fuck it.

Pellemargarothe had drawn back, cowering and letting out a weird sort of whimper, but he recovered quickly, a vibe of pure rage emanating from his whole being even if his face wasn't visible. He marched to the grates and banged his fists into them until the lycan guard (the same or another one, it was impossible to tell) came back, growling something under its breath as it unlocked the door and let itself in.

"He kicked me!" the sorcerer yelled, pointing at Lukas. The lycan remained motionless, its golden eyes trained on the prisoner expectantly. "As a punishment I want you to fuck him! *HARD!*"

"...what?" The golden eyes blinked, the beast tilting its head curiously.

"You don't know what 'fucking' means, you dumb meatball?! It means *mating*! What, you've never done it?!"

Eventually the guard moved, huffing through the nose, and in the next moment its clawed paw closed around the blond's neck. And now Lukas really wanted to cry, because suck Odin's balls for his big mouth, why couldn't he just *shut the fuck up*?!

"I can whip him, or break his legs if you want. But fucking is gonna cost you 1200," the lycan said impassible, turning to Pellemargarothe.

"*FUCK YOU, DICKLESS MUTT!* Get the fuck out of here!" the hooded sorcerer screamed, fists clenched at his sides, before walking back to Lukas, shaking his head.

"No, no, no... that would be too easy." He snorted, tone becoming calm and dead serious. "It's true, I underestimated you. But do you know what it means if someone can handle a berserker potion as well as you did? It means they're really *soulless*. You may think you did

this for your little brother, you may think you *love* him, but there's no such thing in you, Lukas Bondevik. There is nothing but pure, cold, mindless rage and destruction."

"You're a *murderer*!" the younger sorcerer retorted with a sharp glare, even if he was still shaking. "And you don't even have a face! If you're so powerful and you've 'got everyone trembling in fear', why the fuck are you hiding, huh? Why can't you even show me your face?!"

Pellemargaroth nodded slowly, then his gloved hand reached up, pushing the black hood back from his face and head. Lukas gasped, lips parting in shock – the sorcerer looked strikingly plain for an underworlder, and he was much younger than he'd imagined, early forties at most. This sort of appearance could blend in anywhere, he could hide in plain sight-

"I do have everyone trembling in fear of me, and you should too... because I'm going to make you face *what you fear the most*. And we'll make use of that pretty face of yours too, don't worry," Pellemargaroth promised.

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*You dirty motherfucker*, Mathias thought, snorting. *You really shouldn't have let me see you...* Technically, he could have gone after the bastard right now, but it was better to think things through and go about it smoothly. Let him think he had the upper hand for a bit longer. Besides, maybe it was advisable if Pellemargaroth's master was never to find out with absolute certainty who had dealt with him.

*But in the meantime...* He waited until the sorcerer had walked away from his contractor's cell, the light of the torch disappearing down the corridor, then slipped inside, startling Lukas yet again as he popped up without warning.

"Whoa, what the hell?! You scared me!"

Mathias graced the blond with a dull stare, raising an eyebrow. "I scared you... *I scared you*?"

"Wha-"

The Dane's gaze narrowed dangerously. "You know, you almost really fucking did it this time..." he hissed, yet unable to keep up his angry composure as an exasperated sigh escaped him. "I FUCKING DIED OF FEAR IN THAT MOMENT!"

Despite all his previous distress, or maybe precisely because of it, the sorcerer burst into laughter at the other's unwillingly comical expression.

"IT'S NOT FUCKING FUNNY! If you had gotten me fucked by *a lycan*, I would have killed you with my own hands!" Mathias shouted, scowling again. "Damn it, Lukas, why do you always have to get into trouble?!" he grumbled, annoyed that his anger only seemed to fuel his contractor's amusement.

“I-I’m sorry,” the Norwegian muttered, gaze dropping awkwardly but lips still twitching. The Dane huffed petulantly in reply and when he looked up again, he met the other’s expectant gaze. “Um... do you want... something?”

Still scowling and raising an eyebrow, the Grim nodded.

“Okay... but not too much-”

“Not too much what?”

Mathias leaned down, but instead of his contractor’s throat he tentatively brushed his lips against the smaller blond’s mouth. He really hoped Victoria hadn’t fucked with him about this, because he wouldn’t have put it past her... But Lukas kissed him back right away, without hesitation, reaching up to tangle his fingers into the Viking’s hair. His relief was obvious and his adrenaline-weakened body reacted almost instantly when Mathias cupped the side of his face and wrapped an arm around his waist, pulling him closer.

Well, damn, the Grim thought – maybe he too needed this. His tongue delved right in, exploring his contractor’s mouth in the fashion he suspected Lukas enjoyed, although it wasn’t half bad if he was honest, but didn’t waste too much time with it, instead gripping the Norwegian’s bare thighs, lifting him up and pushing him flat against the wall. What the hell, he didn’t do all that *foreplay* bullshit...

“F-Fuck, what if someone sees us...?” the pale blond whispered against his lips, wrapping his legs around Mathias’s waist and one hand shyly reaching down between their bodies to undo the Grim’s trousers.

“We’ll say it’s your fault,” the Dane chuckled, freeing one hand so that he could tug the loose tunic from Lukas’s shoulders down to his waist. “That... you’re impatient too,” he added, trying to focus on the runes he needed to draw as the other rolled his hips against his with a shameless moan. His fingers worked quickly on the small of Lukas’s back, making the magic marks burn into the sorcerer’s skin, then slipped under the light fabric to do the same to the insides of his thighs and lower abdomen.

“Here we go,” he grinned widely, proceeding to try his teeth and flick his tongue on the nipple still reddened by Pellemargaroht’s abuse in the same time as he guided the smaller blond’s body to sink down onto his already rock-hard shaft and bucked his hips up.

“No, w-wait, I need to-...Aaaahhhhhhhh f-fuck you, Kohler!” Lukas moaned, weakly trying to push him away, even as he threw his head back, biting his bottom lip hard. “J-Just... h-ahnnn... s-slowly...”

The Grim pressed their bodies closer, carefully adjusting his up and down movements to his lover’s soft moans. “Don’t worry, I’m taking good care of you, *princess*... Now call my name.”

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Upstairs in the patrons area, Victoria was busy assessing a new champion she was planning to bet on in the next match. Mathias walked up to where the brunette witch stood, her bright smile at the sight of him doing nothing to ease the awkwardness he was currently experiencing.

“Well?”

Averting his gaze with an irritated sigh, the Grim offered her his thumb without a word.

*To be continued*

**Reviews and comments are LOVE ;)**

# Chapter 21

## CHAPTER 20

A/N– Hello everyone! Welcome to the final two chapters of this fantastically fucked-up fic! That's right, this IS the first of the two final chapters, in which we will witness the grand face-off. I hope you enjoyed the ride as much as I enjoyed writing this crazy story, I'm only sorry it took this long and I didn't get to write it faster! Love ya all so much and thank you for the continued support!

---

“What do you mean, ‘it would be advisable if Pellemargaroht’s master never found out with absolute certainty who had dealt with him’? Now you’re telling me there’s *someone else* we need to be worried about?!”

“Keep your voice down,” Mathias asked the other Grim, who was pacing to and fro in the living-room with a flustered expression. “Arthur has gone to sleep and I don’t want him to hear... There’s no need-... I mean considering their job I think it’s in the best interest of both our contractors not to know about Pellemargaroht having a *master*.”

The American stopped in his tracks, looking genuinely worried for once. “What the hell do you mean? Who is-”

“*The-one-who-must-not-be-named*. The *liberated* Grim. Ivan Braginski.” Mathias spoke the words slowly, barely whispering under his breath. “I’m sure you see now why it’s best if they don’t know about it. Otherwise they might decide to go after him as well and if there’s one fight we can’t win... I’m afraid *that* would be it.”

The other blond paled visibly, dropping limply on the couch behind him. “But then-... this is very bad already!” he nearly cried. “Sure, it was a great idea to kill one evil sorcerer and prevent any more young people from dying, but as long as it was gonna be the fucking end of it! But if he’s *that guy*’s minion, then how the fuck do you think we can just get rid of him without getting into much deeper shit instead of putting an end to it?!”

Well, the Dane didn’t have an answer and the more he thought about it, the more it looked like one hella fuck-up on his behalf, because he’d known about this from the very moment Lukas’s cousin had paid the lycan for the sorcerer’s name but he’d dumbly disregarded it the whole time they’d been looking for Pellemargaroht himself. There was no telling how important Pellemargaroht really was to Ivan, but Mathias had a suspicion that the Russian Grim would have taken his minion’s elimination as a personal offence regardless and he would have looked into it...

“Who do you think you can trust with this?” Alfred asked after a while, giving him a wary glance. “That Japanese guy whose loge you go to? That chick Victoria, she’s a witch, isn’t she? I mean, maybe there’s someone you can ask for help, or at least a suggestion...”

Mathias sighed, shrinking further into the backrest in turn. It wasn't as much a matter of trust – Kiku was his long-time friend and Victoria obviously liked him – as the thought that whoever he chose to ask would have become involved in this and thus exposed if-...

“Not Victoria, she knows too many people and if *he* went asking around afterwards she'd be on his list for sure,” he decided eventually. “I only told her that my contractor got into some trouble and that's why he's got to be down there for a while, but I haven't given her any details and I'd like to keep it that way. I guess Kiku is more reserved and he doesn't entertain a lot. I haven't exactly told him what this is about either and if I do ask him anything it must be in a way that no one can make anything out of. Because you know, if Braginski were to ask questions, he could not be lied to, by anyone.”

“Yeah, but how the fuck can you ask without actually asking?”

“You can ask something else.” A sudden idea had come to Mathias as he was speaking, it probably wasn't much but it was something. Sighing, he pulled out his phone and set it on the table, activating the speaker as he dialed the Japanese's number.

---

“*So, you're looking for an assassin now?*” Kiku asked, his soft tone laced with a mixture of prudence and curiosity.

“Yes! Look, this murder my contractor is currently investigating, I'm afraid I can't tell you much about it, it's for your own protection. I can only tell you that it's someone who is supposedly impossible to find! Someone who left not only no witnesses, but no trail.” Damn, now that was to speak out of his ass, it made no fucking sense! “I mean, actually the victim was slain in a public place, so there must have been at least someone who's seen *something*, but the killer managed to disappear without a trace afterwards! Do you have any idea how that is even possible?”

“Dude, have you heard of disappearing spells?” Alfred cut in, rolling his eyes.

“...I don't think it's that simple.”

“*I think I know what you mean. Even if the person has used a disappearing spell immediately after the murder, like you said, they must have been seen by at least one witness and that might become a problem later on. If you ask me, the most effective practice in this sort of assassinations is to use someone who doesn't exist.*”

“Someone who doesn't-...”

“*There are several possibilities, but the first thing that comes to my mind now is a gender-bending potion. A woman, let's say, temporarily transforms into a man who looks vaguely similar to her but is still clearly a man, does the job, then changes back in a short while. No one will ever find the man, because he doesn't exist. I would say that's a very plausible choice if the killer is a woman, women usually have no problem with gender-bending.*”

“So, we could go look for someone who bought a gender-bending potion recently, for a start?” the American suggested.

*“I don’t know how helpful it would be, gender-bending potions are very popular among prostitutes of both genders. You didn’t know that?”*

“Um...”

Mathias stuck his bottom lip out, deflated. Fuck. *A gender-bending potion...* It did sound foolproof, now that he thought about it, but such a shit would have never occurred to him in a million years and he’d sure never used the services of underworld prostitutes, for fuck’s sake! FUCK.

“We’ll look into it anyway, the killer could be a prostitute after all...” he grumbled, giving the other Grim a gloomy glance. “Thanks, Kiku.”

“FUCK! You can’t seriously think of this!” Alfred cried.

“What in bloody hell do you keep yelling about, you odious brat?! I’d barely dozed off for ten minutes!” The sleepy sorcerer dragged himself into the room with a pained groan and collapsed onto the couch next to Mathias. “For fuck’s sake...” he whined, gripping his head in his hands.

“We have decided how to go about eliminating Pellemargarothe in a way that will arouse no unwanted suspicion,” the Dane told him calmly, crossing his arms. “We’ll use a gender-bending potion.”

Arthur looked at him puzzled, blinking owlshly. “Christ kill me, just what I needed...” he said eventually.

“What do you mean *we*?!” the American demanded.

“I’m using it,” Mathias stated stoically. “You’re buying it.”

“No.” Arthur shook his head, curling up on the couch. “I’m using it and you’re watching my back, Alfred. Mathias needs to watch over Lukas during the match, I don’t trust this berserker crap, not against the automatons. And yeah, you’re buying it.”

“Fuck you, red coat!” the younger Grim shouted. “Why the fuck would *I* buy it?!”

Mathias shrugged. “Because I don’t look like a prostitute.”

---

“It’s gonna be tomorrow night,” Lukas said, taking a deep drag from his cigarette and blowing out the smoke tiredly. “The guards told me they’re making special preparations for the automatons – they’ll drain all the murk from the arena floor and replaced it with sand so that their legs don’t rust. I guess Pellemargarothe must be even more important than we thought if he’s getting such a preferential treatment...”

The Dane bit his lip, just about to reply that this was normal, since the automatons were the absolute, undefeated champions of the Dome, but that was the last thing his contractor needed reminding right now. He also would rather not have thought of how important Pellemargaroth was because of the obvious implications.

“At least if I take another berserker potion... I won’t *feel* anything. I won’t even know what the fuck is going on,” the sorcerer snorted bitterly. “Better this way.”

“Lukas-”

“No one has ever defeated the automatons, *no one*. I won’t-”

“You won’t have to! Look, we have already looked into this, the automatons function by drawing the vital energy of their master. If he dies, they’re nothing but a pile of junk! And we do have a fucking plan now!”

Lukas closed his eyes, resting his head against the wall. He felt oddly numb about the whole thing, now that Emil was safe, and if he needed to atone for it...so be it. The dungeon was a tomb, dark and suffocating, at least he’d be out of it, the only thing... Kohler was a good man after all and didn’t deserve this. And Lukas, with his unrivalled talent for shit and bad choices, had managed to make this a really bad contract and a very short one too, damn it!

“You’ll flub it,” he murmured, shaking his head. “I know Arthur really cares about me, but he’s never killed anyone until now. And he might have gotten clearance from his superiors or whatever, but that doesn’t mean he’s comfortable with the idea. It’s not like-...” He couldn’t exactly say ‘like back in your time’, because even nowadays there were plenty of people who had no qualms with killing others and anyway he didn’t think Kohler as a warrior would have understood this sort of reluctance.

He was right on some level, because Mathias indeed didn’t really understand it. However, he was perfectly able to assess someone’s degree of uselessness when it came to getting things done and thus he wasn’t exactly relying on the Englishman or, Thor forbid, Alfred Jones, to save his contractor’s life, and his own for that matter. Jones was responsible with Arthur’s protection and if he managed to fuck up *this* contract as well, it was his problem when Hell would swallow him for good this time, but Mathias was going to make sure that Pellemargaroth kicked the bucket before his contractor did.

“Hey,” he said softly, leaning over the smaller blond and tilting his chin up with two fingers. “Do you remember what I told you? No one fucked *me* yet. And I didn’t come here tonight for a whining session either.” The Dane pulled a small wand out of his pocket and wiggled it demonstratively. “We won’t be able to do this tomorrow before the match, so we’d best get to work.”

---

Mathias crept out of the dungeons and returned to the Magic Crime Department headquarters late into the night, after finally completing the task of putting as many protection runes on the sorcerer’s body as he could. It was a painful procedure, but it was necessary – they would

hold for at least a while – and thankfully Lukas had taken it without making a fuss. On the down side, the Grim suspected it was because the other had given up and had fallen into that very dangerous state of mental numbness characteristic to those irremediably doomed and if this was the case, fuck, he could only hope the berserker potion would snap him out of it enough to do some serious damage to the enemy.

The Englishman was right – Lukas was *fragile*.

It largely wasn't his fault that he was this way, Mathias admitted. And the boy didn't have a wicked heart, he was more like misguided if anything and had put up with too much shit too early on – that sort of thing usually made some people really tough but it broke others to pieces and Lukas happened to fall into the second category.

And...

*'Lukas really likes you'.*

The Dane sighed - this only complicated things further. Not to say he didn't kind of like the Norwegian back, but Mathias had about zero experience with making relationships work – at first he'd been too young for this and later on being dead had served as an equally effective excuse not to even try. But fuck, he was tied to Lukas for the rest of the sorcerer's life, so he supposed that now he could at least-

“What the fuck, dude, are you spacing out?! Did you even hear a word of what I've been saying?!” Alfred whined. “Buying this shit was the worst experience of my entire life! The potions merchant was an old fart and there were other people in the fucking shop as well and when he said-”

“Jones, you are an old fart too,” Arthur interrupted him, calmly pouring a glass of whiskey. “And who the fuck cares what he said? You need to grow the fuck up...”

“Well excuse me if I don't have *your* fucking experience in pretending to be a prostitute! You two crazy fucks made me buy *two doses* no less!”

“Excuse you if I don't give a fuck about what a bunch of tired sods have to say about me,” the Englishman replied, taking a sip of his drink and gracing the Grim with a blank stare.

Mathias sighed again, glancing down at the small bottles filled with a bluish liquid. “Listen, you two, you really need to get your shit together if we want to pull this off, okay?” he grumbled. “Buying and using a fucking gender-bending potion is *totally not* the worst thing we'll have to deal with!”

***To be continued***

**Reviews and comments are L.O.V.E ;)**

A/N – the full story of Ivan Braginski the ‘liberated Grim’ is told in the PruHun sequel to this fic – *Blackmarked*, which was written and published before this (if you didn't know that already).



# Chapter 22

## CHAPTER 21

A/N– Hello my dear readers! So, FINAL CHAPTER – let’s bring it on! (gosh you guys, I’ve been living for the last year and something for Lukas’s arena fights even more than the DenNor going on, if you can believe it :))) )

*Warnings: gender-bending, graphic descriptions of violence, mentions of substance abuse*

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In the large balcony which made up the entrance to the private loges area, Berwald was leaning over the railing, glancing down as the maintenance staff was busy throwing buckets full of fresh white-golden sand over the recently drained bottom of the arena. The crowd was buzzing for excitement for what was coming – the absolute undefeated champions of the Doom Dome were performing for the night and their sight alone was supposed to be a feast for the eyes. More like a sobering sight for the mind though, the Swede was inclined to think, sighing in slight annoyance. Supposedly through Emil, Tino had received an invitation to the Majerus family loge, which had also extended into a free pass to the loges area for Lukas’s boss, but Berwald suspected something different was afoot, namely related to the Finn’s involvement with lady Anri Majerus.

He almost didn’t notice when a gorgeous woman appeared next to him and she too leaned on her elbows on the iron-wrought balustrade, her generous cleavage on display as her forearm nearly brushed against his. But when he finally did notice her, he was stunned.

Luscious, golden-blond hair fell in soft waves on delicate, round shoulders and back down to her waist, gleaming against the crimson, sleeveless silk evening gown which closely hugged the shape of her lean, gracious figure. Long, soft lashes shadowed bright blue eyes over which a thin eyebrow was slightly raised, full rosy lips curling into a demure half-smile.

The Grim cleared his throat softly, discreetly smoothing his clothes as he straightened his back a little – this girl was far more beautiful than lady Majerus, maybe he could make Tino jealous-

“Don’t stare at me, you fool!” the beauty told Berwald, her expression changing brusquely and her voice oddly familiar.

The Swede squinted for a bit, then- “*KOHLER? IS THAT YOU?!*”

“Keep your voice down! I’m not doing this for the sake of flaunting how beautiful I am regardless of what I choose to ‘wear’, you know?” she said. “Anyway, thanks for getting us the invitation! I thought Kiku was best kept in the dark about this, for his own protection... and ours.”



Berwald shrugged awkwardly, adjusting his spectacles. “Uh... don’t mention it. The least we could do, I mean he is Tino’s cousin after all. And I gotta say – the kid’s got some balls to take a berserker potion, back in the day I wouldn’t even-... I stayed the fuck away from *those*, they were serious trouble.”

The Dane allowed himself a small proud smile at that. Lukas *was* surprisingly brave when he had to be, and he’d been even ready to lay down his life to save his little brother.

“But do you really think you can pull this off?”

“It’s the job, my friend. Would *you* not stick a blade into someone’s back for your contractor? Not someone worth sparing either, mind you.”

“That’s not what I meant! I heard he’s a dangerous fellow!”

“He’s a fool who’s expecting to be protected solely by his reputation,” Mathias pointed. “Might as well prove him wrong.”

“Berwald!”

Mathias saw his contractor’s little brother walking up to them, in the company of one of Luca Majerus’s vampire servants, apparently his boyfriend. The icy-blond boy was now wearing the same full black attire of the rest of the Luxembourger’s servants, which brought out even more the almost sickly pallor of his face, and his fingers were nervously gripping the Asian vampire’s hand.

“You shouldn’t be here again, Emil...” the Swede grumbled, shaking his head. “’s really no place for kids.”

“Eh, don’t worry, I’ll take good care of him, he’s safe with me,” Leon assured him, wrapping an arm around the boy’s shoulders and pulling him closer.

“I thought you said Lukas’s Grim was gonna be up here?” Emil asked, making the Grim bite his upper lip in an awkward way and proceed to stuff his hands in his pockets, half-turning away.

“I am Lukas’s Grim,” Mathias informed him with a wide grin, offering his hand in greeting. “Name’s Mathias Kohler. You must be Emil, right?”

The boy blinked, gaze trailing involuntarily up and down the blonde’s body in a mixture of awe and complete confusion. “Uh...wha-”

“Not bad, I’ll say,” the raven-haired vampire by his side observed.

“Hey!” Emil scowled, elbowing the other in the side. “What the hell, I thought all Grims were guys?! And you have a *guy* name too...” he grumbled, his angry expression quickly replaced again by the anxious one.

“Indeed,” the Dane confirmed. “But things got a little complicated right now-”

“But you *will* save Lukas, right?!” the teen pleaded, wide-eyed.

“I will.”

“You, take Emil back to your mistress’s loge,” Berwald told the Asian. “And you, don’t fuck this up!”

---

His wide grin fell off into a preoccupied scowl as soon as Berwald walked away with the boys. Now at the moment of truth Mathias really hoped that the Englishman would be up to the task. To their relative luck, Pellemargarothe had –as expected - chosen to hide in plain sight, taking up one of the central loges, the all-concealing cloak he’d worn up until now replaced with fancy garments after the fashion of the richest sorcerers. Apparently there were no guards with him, but he did currently entertain a few guests.

“Did you find the bloody bastard? These shoes are fucking killing me!”

Either the gender-bending potion also had some beautifying effects, or Arthur Kirkland would have been really cute as a girl. ‘Alice’ was a bit on the petite side and the loosely braided golden-blonde hair added to the schoolgirl-ish air given by the sober, just above the knee black-and-white checkered dress with white lace collar. In turn she had hazarded – not at all unsuccessfully – into applying some make-up as well, the dark eye-shadow and mascara bringing out the peridot green of her eyes.

“He’s over there,” the Grim pointed. “But we’ll need to wait for the right time. It can’t happen too early on in the match or it will instantly raise suspicion. Lukas must fight for a bit and then we strike. Do you have everything?”

Arthur lifted his skirt a bit, showing the sheath of a dagger strapped to his thigh.

“Dude, this is so much like that game, *American McGee’s Alice*! It’s like we’re fucking going for the Queen of Hearts...” This time Alfred was the one hidden under a hooded cloak (which happened to look rather funny on his lanky frame) because since he could have been recognized, being in his company could have tipped people off about ‘Alice’’s real identity. “So what’s the plan again?”

“I’ll stay here and keep an eye on the match, if Lukas gets in trouble-... rather *when* he gets in trouble I will have to intervene, but you too must wait outside Pellemargarothe’s loge. When I give you the signal, you storm it and kill him. In theory it shouldn’t be a problem, because he has no guards from what I can tell, but I don’t know about the guests... All clear?”

“Pfff... fuck. Yeah, let’s do this,” the Englishman agreed with a deep sigh. He turned on his heels and walked towards the corridor leading to the loges, awkwardly keeping his balance on the high heels.

“Hey, Jones,” Mathias said, momentarily gripping the other Grim’s arm. “Just don’t fuck this up *again*, I’ve got enough on my hands already.”

---

“It’s gonna be fine,” Victoria whispered, giving a light squeeze to the blond’s shoulder as the guard opened the cell door, letting in the ‘wardrobe’ staff. The witch had prepared another, even stronger berserker potion for the match, but it had to be administered right before the start, because the effects were instant. Luckily, she often provided such services and no one questioned her presence there.

The lycan walked in as well and undid the sorcerer’s cuffs, allowing the other servants to start the preparations. Lukas’s tunic was replaced by a pair of very tight trousers and a light white, rather frilly shirt, on top of which a stiff leather corset was tied, painfully constricting his stomach and lower half of his torso, the laces being pulled as tightly as they went. And on top of that went a gorgeous, dark-purple colored velvet dress, falling down to his knees, the waist and bodice tight and the upper part of the sleeves a bit puffed, matched with a pair of knee-high boots. His hair was again braided to the side, close to his skull, the braid secured in place with his usual cross-shaped barrette, while on the other side the pale blonde bangs hung loosely.

“Oh Gods, you look *so beautiful!*” the witch exclaimed in awe.

“I can’t breathe...”

“Come on, you two,” the guard prompted, moving to grip Lukas’s shoulder and shove him out of the cell. “It’s time.”

They walked in silence up the corridor leading to the visitors area and then to one of the gates, from which the already bright lights of the arena were visible and the loud noise of the impatient crowd reached their ears.

“Eh, at least it’s not an execution this time,” the lycan in charge with the armory said, offering the sorcerer a freshly-sharpened axe and a mace.

“Then why am I not getting any armor?”

“It’d ruin the costume, ye’re supposed to be a *princess* or somethin’ for this match, your master’s orders,” the beast explained. “And against those iron things it’d be useless anyway. But I guess it’d be somethin’ if someone crushed those damned contraptions once and for all, there have been no more fair games ever since they came around...”

Outside, the presenter was announcing something loudly, the voice mostly drowned by the overwhelming noise of the crowd and the lycan motioned with its head for the grated gate, which was beginning to lift. Taking a deep breath and rolling his shoulders, the Norwegian put his weapons down and turned towards the cup Victoria was holding. Grimacing, he tugged at the bodice, trying to loosen a bit the blasted corset which all but kept him from drawing proper breaths.

“You know, Mathias likes you too, a lot,” the witch told him, passing the berserker potion with a serious air.

Lukas flinched, gripping the cup with both hands. “Wha-? I-I don’t think so...” he stammered, staring awkwardly into the potion. What the fuck?! He’d not told anyone he liked Kohler, and as for it being mutual, hell, it was very unlikely after all the trouble he’d gotten the Dane in... FUCK.

“He just doesn’t know how much yet,” the brunette assured him with a smirk.

*Fuck it. Too bad, it doesn’t matter anymore.*

He downed the disgusting liquid in one go, the empty cup dropping from his hand as the potion went down his throat, feeling stinging and ice-cold at first, then warming up into a burning inferno seeping into every cell of his body. Taken with the frightening sensation, he didn’t even feel the lycan pushing him outside in the arena, only hearing the heavy gate being lowered back in his wake.

The light was blinding-bright, reflected by the sparkly sand as he stumbled upon it, clinging to his two weapons as the only certainty. And there was something else that sparkled a bit further away, next to the opposing gate, a metal cylinder suspended on thin legs, inside of which he could see countless cogwheels turning incessantly. Then another showed up from behind it, then two more.

Lukas’s fingers clutched the handles of the weapons currently pressed against his thighs as panic began to grip him. *But no, this isn’t an execution...* He could smell them, warm, oiled metal running smoothly, perfect, harmonious, indestructible, beautiful, *alive*.

*Alive*. And now he was angry. *What is alive can die. What is alive must die.*

The crowd began cheering wildly as the metal creatures slowly moved into a semi-circle, multiple arms fanning out with blades at the ready.

Lukas began walking towards them, making the automatons advance in turn, then broke into a run, suddenly turning left when he was near them instead of going into their midst. The mace struck the closest automaton on the side in full, breaking two arms out of three and shoving it straight into the set of swords held by the one to its right.

The sorcerer moved quickly behind the group, the blade of his axe severing the legs of the second automaton, the contraption collapsing and lifting the first one – still impaled in its blades – off the ground. The remaining two wheeled around, launching some of their weapons in their opponent’s direction. One hatchet hit his arm and Lukas felt the added burn of the protection rune deflecting the blow, further fueling his fury and making him sever more of the offending arms and even bash one of the cylinders to its half with the mace, until the last two automatons were also taken out of the fight.

But the victory was short-lived – the gate on the automatons’ side had remained up for a reason, now another four came out and the first destroyed ones were also beginning to fix and piece themselves back together again. It was a nightmarish sight and Mathias swore out loud,

forgetting he was supposed to be a delicate lady for the evening. Good thing that unlike Arthur he could reverse to his true form anytime he wanted, because he already ached to get some action and it looked like the time for it was gonna be even sooner than he'd anticipated.

*"DON'T WORRY, MY LITTLE IRON SOLDIERS WILL DEFEAT THE PRETTY ICE QUEEN!"* came the presenter's voice through the sound system. In his loge, the Dane saw Pellemargaroth sitting quietly, a cruel smile curling his lips. *"AND NORMALLY I WOULD HAVE KEPT HER BODY FOR MY COLLECTION, BUT SINCE THE ICE QUEEN IS A BOY I WILL ONLY KEEP HIS HEAD!"*

"Dude, what *the actual fuck* did he just say?!" Alfred whispered from under his hood, turning to peek through the drawn curtains at the entrance of Pellemargaroth's loge.

The Englishman at his side, who was leaning against a wall with a glass of wine in hand tutted. "Fuck what he said! Did Mathias give you the bloody signal yet?"

"Not yet."

Lukas had withdrawn a bit, axe and mace weighed impatiently in his hands as he leaned forward expectantly, rocking on the balls of his feet. The automatons charged in his direction as one, much faster now, surrounding him in no time. More iron limbs flew around, severed by the Norwegian's axe and a couple of automatons were crushed by the mace before the protection runes around his torso finally wore off under the blows and two blades pierced his body in the same time – one in the rib and the other in the shoulder. Lukas dropped on his knees, the remaining weapon falling from a limp hand and an automaton carrying a large meat cleaver stepped in front of him, readying itself to take the blond's head.

But right before it could strike, the iron contraption was suddenly severed in half and Mathias, who had just appeared in front of his contractor in all the splendor of his original Viking attire, kicked away one of the parts, giving a spin to his enormous battle axe.

*"JUST BECAUSE YOU CAN TAKE THE QUEEN, IT DOESN'T MEAN YOU CAN DEFEAT THE KING!"* he roared, in the mad cheers of the ecstatic audience, while behind him Lukas collapsed backwards onto the sand, unconscious. Immediately afterwards, three more automatons were swiped away by the infernal weapon, being sent flying and one of them even crashing against one of the arena walls. But the damaged ones were already fixing and reassembling themselves, even faster now.

*Alfred, NOW!*

Arthur moved even faster than his Grim, tearing through the silk curtain into the loge, hand shooting under his skirt and unsheathing the dagger as he rushed forward. Pellemargaroth and his three guests were all nearly bent over the railing, captivated by the action and none of them noticed the blonde girl coming from behind them, a hooded figure in her tow.

The blade sunk mercilessly in the back of Pellemargaroth's neck in the same time as Alfred used an empty bottle he'd picked from the table to promptly knock out the three guests before

they could realize what was going on. Afterwards, the American helped his contractor pull the dying sorcerer back and into a seat.

“Fuck, it’s not over yet!” the taller blond swore after one glance at the arena, where Mathias was still surrounded by the iron beasts. He tore the bloody dagger from the Englishman’s hand and drove it savagely into the man’s skull, as deep as it went.

After this, finally, down below the automatons slowed in their movements, as if they’d rusted brusquely. Fortunately the Dane was fast enough and could finish them all off before their malfunction became evident and very soon he was standing in the middle of a circle of metallic debris, whatever parts had not been sent flying further away into the arena.

In the crowd’s frantic cheers, as Mathias finally collected his fallen ‘queen’ from the ground, Arthur and Alfred hurried out of the sorcerer’s loge and once outside used a disappearing spell.

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*Two days later*

“How is he? Can I see him?!” Emil nearly barged in, barely held back by Tino.

“He’s fine now, resting. There’s no more danger,” the Englishman assured him, stepping aside and inviting the two inside. He led the way to Lukas’s room.

“But back there he nearly-...?”

“Nearly kicked the bucket, yeah,” the green-eyed blond confirmed. “We didn’t have too much time, had to be fast about it...”

He sighed, crossing his arms, shoulders hunched as the teen walked into the room almost timidly, proceeding to sit down on the edge of his brother’s bed. Lukas was still fast asleep, looking very pale and half his torso covered in bandages. Emil leaned over, softly murmuring something while gently brushing a few strands away from his sibling’s forehead.

“I guess... I’ll come back later, I’ll let him sleep now,” he said eventually, standing. “You’ll let me know when he wakes up, yes?” The Englishman nodded tiredly. “Anyway, don’t worry, the Majerus family is quite pleased with-...”

Mathias snorted, stepping away from the window as the door closed behind the two and he was again left alone with his contractor in the semi-obscurity of Lukas’s room. He went to sit on the other side of the bed, sighing. According to Kirkland, this was the Magic Crime Department first important mission they’d managed to accomplish. Fuck, would it always be this ‘exciting’ from now on? Obviously, he knew he hadn’t been contracted to sit on his ass, but still... The Dane sat there pondering for a long while before a sharp pang in his side let him know his contractor was finally awake.

Lukas gasped loudly and moved to sit up, but his wounds made him reconsider halfway and he fell back with a groan.

“Hey...”

“F-Fuck, I thought I was back in the dungeon...” the Norwegian breathed out. “Is... is it over?”

“Yeah, and now you’re back in your own dungeon of a room,” Mathias offered with a grin. “I told you, no one fucked *me* yet.” Although they almost had. “How do you feel?” Stupid question – it hurt like hell and unlike the others he really didn’t need to ask.

Lukas sighed, shifting under the blanket and curling up on the good side. “I-I’m really sorry... about everything,” he whispered. “I really thought I was done for this time, and when Victoria said-... uh... I mean...”

*Victoria. Of course, shit had to be extra-stirred by a woman’s malevolent hand.* “What did she say?”

The sorcerer bit his lip. “...that you like me.” He relaxed somewhat when he felt Mathias’s arm wrapping gently around his waist from behind and the other’s warmth was pressed against his body. “So, it’s true that... you like me?”

“No! You *troll!*”

**THE END**

**Reviews and comments are LOVE ;)**

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